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Swords into ploughshares: Seeking an end to nuclear arms

Nicholas Schuurman

WATERLOO, Ontario – Two recent milestones in the ongoing efforts to abolish nuclear weapons have recently made their way into the headlines. The first is the historic Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) signed April 8, in which U.S. President Barack Obama and Russia's Dmitri Medvedev agreed to cut their respective nuclear stockpiles to 1,550 warheads, compared to estimates of over 30,000 each boasted at the peak of the Cold War. In May, *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* reported that Russia still currently has 12,000 nuclear warheads, and the U.S. has 9,600. Second is the Nuclear Posture Review, a statement of nuclear policy made by the Obama administration declaring that the United States will not use nuclear weapons against countries that are in compliance with the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty.

I sat down with John Siebert, former Foreign Service Officer of the Department of Foreign Affairs and current executive director of Project Ploughshares, to hear his thoughts on the recent moves and learn more about his organization (of which the Christian Reformed Church is a member church). Project Ploughshares is an operating agency of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) that works to respond to global conflict and, in particular, the international arms trade.

The Cold War era is over, but nuclear weapons still pose a very serious and urgent threat to humanity. Is there any good news?

Two really interesting advances in the last month are that the United States and the United Kingdom have both publicly announced, for the first time, how many [operational] nuclear weapons they have. That's never happened before. The agreement between Russia and the United States to make cuts to nuclear weapons is also a step

See **Nuclear arms** *on page 2*

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed . . .
Declaration of Independence, 1776

The American struggle for individual liberty continues
Part I: The Tea Party revisited

Mike Wevers

On July 4, our southern neighbour celebrated the 234th anniversary of the most pivotal event in its history, when the representatives of the 13 colonies agreed to break ties with the British colonial power. This event, and the eloquent and dramatic words of the Declaration of Independence itself, forms the cornerstone of the whole American political system. The themes of liberty and freedom that permeate American political discourse are the recurring echoes of a revolution two centuries old.

Revolution and liberty

One of the most important precursors to the Declaration of Independence arose over the British government's taxing power in the colonies. In May of 1773, King George III gave assent to the Tea Act, enabling the East India Company to deliver tea direct to the American colonies. It also continued a tax on tea imported into the colonies as approved by the British parliament, even though the King had been warned that such a tax might incite resistance. Because the tax was instituted by a parliament in which the colonies had no representation, opposition to the East India tea and its tax grew quickly. Colonial leaders had been arguing against such British taxing power for years and recommended the tea be returned to England. Three colonies agreed, but the Governor of Boston refused to return three ship loads of taxed tea to England. On the night of December 15, 1773, some colonists boarded the ships and threw the tea into Boston Harbour.

The "Boston Tea Party," as it became known, showed the determination of the colonists to tell the parliament in Great Britain and its King that they no longer enjoyed the consent of the American people. Thus "Tea Party" entered the lexicon of American politics as a rallying cry for when it appears that

See **Tea Party** *on page 2*

News

Nuclear arms *continued*

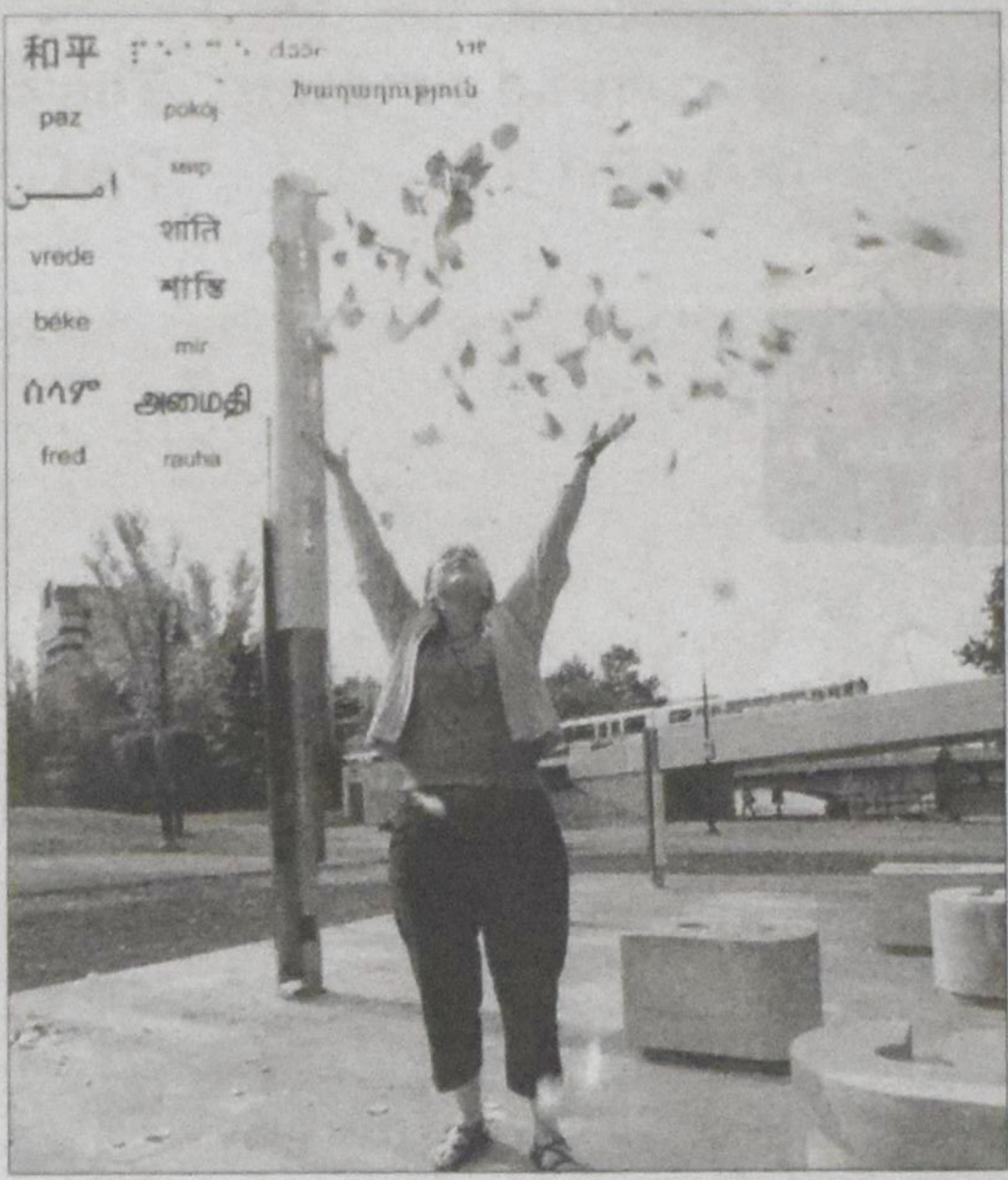
in the right direction. In addition, last week on Friday, the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty closing document for the first time had reference to a nuclear weapons convention. That represents a potential avenue for how to get to where we're going.

How does your faith inform your response to the issue of nuclear weapons?

We leave it up to the 23 member churches in the Canadian Council of Churches to articulate their faith reasons for their stance. We happen to have churches from the historic peace churches – Mennonites and Quakers – as well as churches who share a just war position. With respect to nuclear weapons, however, there is no just war justification. You simply cannot justify nuclear war on a just war basis, and therefore all the member churches are nuclear pacifists. The member churches have been strong in the tradition of opposing nuclear arms and are working now on the Commission on Justice and Peace of the Canadian Council of Churches to put out a letter on behalf of the churches, re-articulating what hasn't been said since 1983, which is the basic position of the churches when it comes to nuclear weapons, and to send that to the Prime Minister and other political figures. This letter has now been approved and should be posted to the CCC's and Project Ploughshare's websites shortly.

Do you ever feel in tension working from a distance? How intimately are you connected to the issues?

That varies so much. Sometimes, when you work with this stuff all the time, you develop an odd sense of humour – you have to laugh or you're going to cry. We deal with peace building and response to violent conflict in other parts of the world; we're not in those places, but the people who are – those are the people of real courage.



Project Ploughshares Calgary spearheaded the installation of a Peace Pole downtown. The pole includes the word for peace (see a few on top left) in eighty languages spoken in Calgary.

How do you respond to the climate of fear that seems to surround nuclear arms?

I have the privilege of being a parent, and you wouldn't believe what kind of fears I have about what might happen to my children. But, you know, I don't live in fear. I have fears, but I don't live in fear. I think the same has to be true about some of these wretched problems, like climate change, nuclear weapons or gun violence.

How do you address the challenge of abolishing nuclear weapons in which goals are of such a long term nature and change so incremental?

It's decades into this work; people use comparisons to slavery. If we can imagine backwards, a lot of people could not have conceived that it would end. And it did. I mean, there are modes of slavery in the world today that still need to be addressed, but officially, you can't do it anymore. Someday, that will be true for nuclear weapons as well. Because the alternative [of using them] is too terrible to think about.

The Catholics say they think in centuries. That's a challenge for us Protestants. I can tell you for sure, in 1986 or 1987, the end of the Cold War – no one in any official position that I was interacting with as an employee of Foreign Affairs would have predicted the end. It was always thought that there was going to be a confrontation. That would be the end of the Cold War as we know it. But something happened. Was it predictable? I don't know. I didn't know anybody who predicted it.

[It's] similar to apartheid, and the two things are closely attached. I've been meeting people from South Africa that I asked, "What were we thinking in 1988?" They thought it was never going to end without a major conflagration in the form of civil war and bloodshed. And it didn't. We know that apartheid, its underlying structural problems, have not been fully addressed. There is still a great deal of violence and difficulty and the whole question of land distribution – all these things have not been fully addressed. But, going back to the conflict and violence question: will those things be resolved over time non-violently, through political processes, negotiations and that sort of thing? So far, so good.

Nicholas Schuurman is a potato farmhand and pastoral intern currently dividing his time between Alliston and Kitchener, Ontario.

Tea Party *continued*

the government is no longer listening to its people. The Tea Party reference is often used too swiftly and very lightly. Occasionally, it is meant as a reminder that the British parliament and its King, who ignored the original Boston Tea Party, did so at their peril. After all, the peaceful Tea Party protest was followed by much more serious events – the American Revolutionary War in 1775 and the Declaration of Independence a year later, which specifically mentions such tyrannical acts as "imposing taxes on us without our consent" as a rationale.

The new Tea Party movement

The American political landscape is again rife with the Tea Party's rallying cry. Current Tea Party enthusiasts point to three pieces of legislation which they believe reflect that the government, although ruling with people's elected consent, has lost touch with what the people want.

The current Tea Party cries are not just simply concerns with Democratic Party initiatives since they are rooted in the public reaction to the Bush administration's $700 billion Emergency Economic Stabilization Act, passed in October 2008. Congress passed the legislation, with clear majorities in the Senate and the House of Representatives. Congress believed it needed to act, owing to a mortgage financing crisis and to halt the market tailspin resulting from the Wall Street banker Lehman Brothers bankruptcy, and the federal takeover of mortgage providers Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Although Congress and the Bush administration enjoyed the support of many economists for instituting the Troubled Assets Relief Program through the Act, there were many detractors who saw it as a bailout of the Wall Street elite.

(Left) Tea party signs of the times.

(Right) Protesters in Dallas claim to be "shackled by the stimulus."

The current Tea Party push for change in government widened when President Obama continued the Bush administration's spending and market intervention. In February 2009, the recently inaugurated President signed the $787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to provide assistance to workers affected by the recession as well as stimulus funds for infrastructure and to help move the USA out of recession. Again, some experts hailed the spending as sound counter cyclical economic activity; however, many perceived it to be more Washington pork barrelling enabled through increasing America's public debt burden which would hamstring future economic activity.

The most recent, of course, and arguably most contentious of the three pieces of legislation which have stimulated the Tea Party movement is President Obama's March 2010 signing of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, completing his push for legislating health care reform. Many current Tea Party supporters will not rest until this legislation is rescinded.

Grassroots democracy

Trying to understand the current Tea Party label and to whom that applies is not an easy task. There is no single organization and certainly no one person leading this loose coalition of discontent simmering at local level. Although references to Tea Party-type activities were present in the 2008 election cycle, the Tea Party movement gained momentum in early 2009. Many grassroots developments were aided and abetted by conservative radio talk show and television news show personalities. Their protests against government economic stimulus spending culminated in the first "Nation-wide Chicago Tea Party" in February 2009. Since then, the movement has gained considerable momentum. President Obama and his Democratic Party will have to determine how to derail this momentum or see a Tea Party celebration at the mid-term elections this November which may outdo its Bostonian roots.

Mike Wevers recently retired as Assistant Deputy Minister with the Alberta Government's Treasury Board. He lives in Edmonton. The second part of this series, in CC's July 26 issue, will examine the current Tea Party movement more closely.

News

Chatting with G-8 leaders after the official group photo in Deerhurst.

The Prime Minister's Scrapbook

Photos of the recent G-8 and G-20 summits from the Prime Minister's Office.
For a protester's point of view, turn to page 20.

Arriving by helicopter at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.

(Left) Welcoming Jan Peter Balkenende, PM of the Netherlands, to the G-20. (Below) Last-minute talk with neighbouring US President, Barack Obama at the G-20.

Attending a dinner with Manmohan Singh, PM of India, to celebrate Canada-India relations.

One week later, PM Harper hosts the Queen.

Propaganda warfare

Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

Even before 9/11 there was little doubt that winning the propaganda war can turn the tide in a real war. This should be kept in mind as we assess last month's Israeli attack on the Gaza aid flotilla. According to George Friedman, of Stratfor Global Intelligence, the Turkish NGO that organized the aid flotilla was doing more than to assist innocent Palestinians suffering from an unjust blockade. Its leaders sought to provoke an Israeli over-reaction that would bring down the world's condemnation, damage Turkish-Israeli relations, alienate the United States from Israel, and possibly provoke an internal political crisis in Israel itself. In so doing, the flotilla's organizers were borrowing a strategy employed by Zionists against the British in the late 1940s in the run-up to Israeli independence.

The current Israeli government played along with this strategy, seemingly falling into the trap set for it and willingly suffering the consequences hoped for by its enemies. I will not leap to Israel's defence here. Given that virtually all my Cypriot relatives lost their homes in 1974, I have considerable sympathy for the plight of Palestinian refugees. At the same time, the complexities of the longstanding Israeli-Palestinian standoff should rule out any rush to judgement against Israel. A functioning Palestinian state could have got off the ground long ago, if Palestinians had been better served by their own leadership.

No deep insight

How have North American Christians responded? The major North American protestant denominations and the World Council of Churches condemned the Israeli attack. On the surface it is difficult to disagree with these assessments. Israel's blockade has caused hardship for the innocent residents of Gaza, and it has had next to no impact in loosening Hamas' hold on that troubled territory. The principles of the just war do not countenance a military strategy aimed at civilians.

That said, Hamas and similar groups do not shrink from hiding among civilians to achieve their goal of antagonizing Israel. When Israel strikes back as expected, and when civilians die, virtually the entire world blames Israel and not the cowardly terrorists who initially provoked that country and, in effect, used innocent Palestinians as hostages. The churches chime in along with these others, offering no distinctive insight that might flow from their commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I am not particularly keen on churches *as institutions* pronouncing on complex issues of public policy and international relations, at least partly because of their tendency to assume that all such issues can be viewed as cosmic struggles between a good side and an evil side, the line between which can be easily identified. However, real-life politics does not admit of such facile categorizations. Few political issues see an obvious division between justice and injustice, oppressor and oppressed. One is far more likely to see conflict between two different conceptions of justice – between two groups pursuing competing but plausible visions of the public good.

I will not pretend to point the way to a resolution of the long Israeli-Palestinian stalemate, which has eluded three generations of foreign policy officials in many countries. That said, one-sided condemnations do nothing to advance justice and are far more likely to play into the hands of those who have an interest in obstructing reconciliation. Well-meaning churches should not put themselves in the position of being used by terrorist groups for their own purposes.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and still blogs at: http://byzantinecalvinist.blogspot.com/.

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Editorial

The cure for over-consumption

Angela Reitsma Bick

When I first got married, there were a number of things to sort out with my new housemate, including a dish schedule, book-shelf organizing tactics and sock folding methods. Eventually we agreed that the cook gets out of dishes and that our books would be separated by genre and then alphabetized; unfortunately, nine years later we still haven't agreed on the one right way to fold socks.

In those early months, I also noticed our different approaches to making large purchases. Like anyone just starting out, we needed to buy a few big items – outdoor garbage cans, a table, a bed. Not being a shopper, I was usually content to purchase the first one I liked with the lowest price tag. I also came from a family that considered frugality a virtue on par with honesty. My husband Allan, on the other hand, wanted to buy something sturdy and dependable, even if that meant paying more. He scoffed at particle board, pine veneer and "made in China" labels. He wanted stuff that would last.

An acquired taste

The Story of Stuff Project by Annie Leonard is a twenty-minute animated web-film illustrating a materials-based economy, showing where all the stuff we own comes from and where it goes. She demonstrates how we evaluate ourselves and others based on purchasing ability. Leonard traces the origin of this North American worldview (as others have done) to the politics of a post-WWII economy, when spending was seen as pivotal to recovery.

"Our enormously productive economy . . . demands that we make consumption our way of life," retail analyst Victor Lebow said in 1955. "We [need to] see our spiritual satisfaction, our ego satisfaction, in consumption."

Two factors have driven Lebow's dream into terrible reality since then: planned and perceived obsolescence. Planned (or functional) obsolescence means that designers and manufacturers intentionally develop flawed or short-lived products, forcing us to buy replacements. This includes cameras, cars and the Swiffer WetJet. Perceived obsolescence plays on our greed. It's a marketing tool convincing us that still useable products are unfashionable once newer versions exist. Clothes are the most obvious example of this, but it also extends more subtly to things like paint colours and patio furniture. As a result of this two-pronged approach, *The Story of Stuff* claims that only one percent of what we buy will still be in use six months after its date of purchase. This fuels the materials-based economy wonderfully, as Lebow imagined.

Our inherent gluttony and our acquired taste for cheap, transient stuff, however, comes at a terrible cost to workers in the developing world, to the environment and to our sense of satiation. Like a child who can't tell when he's full, we have lost the ability to gauge sufficiency and – consequently – peace. We seem unable to leave a store without more than we came for. When we get used to lawn mowers, spring jackets and motor homes all having imminent expiry dates, we start to tire more quickly of everything: a church home, a volunteer position, a relationship. "Why is everyone hungry for *more*?" the Psalmist wonders. "I have God's more-than-enough. More joy in one ordinary day than they get in all their shopping sprees" (Psalm 4 in *The Message*).

Slow consumption

Of course, there are still times when you simply need to buy a bed. As it turns out, Allan had the right idea. The solution to an economy dependant on churning out stuff destined for early discard is "to start making stuff that lasts" (*In These Times* magazine, Nov. 09). Inventor Saul Griffith calls this "heirloom design" – products that are durable, repairable and upgradeable, a "radically obvious idea." (If this seems obvious, your memory probably extends before 1955. If not, it seems radical.) Tim Cooper, author of an upcoming book called *Longer Lasting Solutions*, argues for a switch to "slow consumption" in order to create a more sustainable economy. It would also, in my opinion, free up our time from shopping, cultivate an appreciation for time-intensive products and help rediscover a sense of enough.

If heirloom design is going to cure over-consumption, *In These Times* says that policy changes are necessary to make disposable items more expensive and to renew an interest in repair. Suppliers need to extend warrantees to consider a product's full lifecycle. The manufacturing jobs that might be lost by this shift, Cooper hopes, will be replaced by highly-skilled maintenance and repair jobs.

Perceived obsolescence, however, feeds on greed and cannot be as easily remedied. In Romans 1, when Paul lists "every kind of wickedness" exhibited by those who have rejected God, greed makes the top three. The solution here is not policy change but a change of heart. We need to recognize the role of greed in consumption and its impact on God's earth. We can't live without affecting this planet, but we can choose the effect we want to make.

Antiquated or avant-garde?

A few months ago, I was playing a board game called *Social Circles* with some relatives. One question involved guessing how many participants were wearing an item of clothing more than ten years old. When we revealed our answers, everyone vacillated between horror and admiration that two people qualified. That kind of loyalty is impressive.

Thrifty consumers can be convinced by cheap prices, but the heirloom design movement hopes that the prospect of connecting emotionally to long-lived products will be more persuasive. Think of how satisfying it is to fix a bike with a $7 part rather than getting a new one, even second-hand. Think of passing down your old orange polyester pyjamas to your five-year-old daughter. Think of how it feels to find spiritual satisfaction in God's presence, in his "more-than-enough," rather than in your identity as a consumer.

Angela Reitsma Bick is co-editor of CC and lives in Barrie, Ontario.

Let there be . . . stuff? A spirit-filled response to a consumer-crazed world is a detailed, six-session curriculum to help Christian teens explore the relationship between consumption and faith. It's free for download at *www.storyofstuff.org.*

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Letters

Books on Alzheimer's

(A letter to Rudy Eikelboom)

Dear Rudy,

I noted with interest your recent column in *Christian Courier* (May 24). Since my mother has Alzheimer's your article is quite relevant.

I've read a few books relating to this whole business. One that my wife just passed to me is *Still Alice* by Lisa Genova, quite a widely-read book, which deals with selfhood in a novel form. I recall that Michael Ignatieff (yes, *our* Michael Ignatieff) has written a novel, *Scar Tissue*, also dealing with dementia, and in my notebook I gave it a mark of appreciation. I am an Oliver Sachs devotee, which started when I read *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*. I discovered that this neurologist always looked for the individual's integrity, selfhood, and made this primary. (I hope I said that right. The famous quotation goes something like this: "When we study a disease we learn about anatomy, biology, etc. When we study the person with the disease we learn wisdom about life.")

I was wondering if someday you could comment, as one who has professional expertise, on some of these books or the topics they raise. I'd be interested to hear what you have to say. Yours is one of the columns I always look for in *CC*.

P.S. I also work in the CRC Disability Concerns Committee, and we have amassed quite a reading list on the topic. One of our regional advisors is a specialist in care of those with dementia.

P.P.S. My mother says, "I always sit next to my husband when there is a crowd, and when I get confused, he whispers in my ear what's going on." She also told me: "I often don't find the word, but Wilfred has lots of words so he loans me some."

Shalom
Curt Gesch
Telkwa, British Columbia

Hi Curt,

I must admit to having a split personality on Alzheimer's. The one side is the human side – where I live through the experience with my mom, and unfortunately with others who are being taken home one memory at a time. The other is as a scientist where I look at proteins and miss-folded shapes and a few misplaced amino acids as the probable, ultimate cause of this disorder. I am not sure whether these things come together easily in my mind, except where they are both filed under the name of the disorder.

But this is true of many disorders – the biological cause and the reality of the person with the illness are not easy to connect. I think that is what is behind the wonderful quote you captured from Sachs. I love his writing but have not read as much of this as I should. Nor have I read the other books you mentioned. I think that if they help in this type of situation, then one can say "thank-you to God" for the authors' efforts.

As Christians I think it is possible to capture a different view of the humanity of these diseases, and that is what I tried to explore in the very brief comments on how we think of death. I know that I will be united with my complete mom at some point, either when Jesus returns or when we are both in Glory. It is this hope that I live in.

Rudy Eikelboom
Waterloo, Ontario

She ought to know better

Re: Al Wolters, *In All Thy Sons Command* June 28, 2010

C'mon, Al. Biblical language and its pervasive use of male references – he, man, sons, heirs – is one thing, but to assume that subsequent cultures should necessarily carry on that practice is quite another. I certainly wouldn't propose to change Scripture to be gender inclusive, but isn't it true that language and culture are symbiotically related? As a culture develops, many of its words shift in meaning (for better or for worse).

Consider the etymology of the word "nice" (to be sure, a pretty useless word in our culture). If I were to use it with the meaning it had in Shakespeare's day (precise, carefully wrought), I would be misunderstood; what's more, it would be my own fault for not meeting my listeners halfway. In our North American culture, when people say "son" they generally *mean* son, and not "daughter." How can that be counter-intuitive as you suggest? And where's the social or spiritual benefit to keep insisting that when you use masculine pronouns, you really *are* including everyone? Isn't it time to turn the page on that old argument?

Keeping the word "sons" in our national anthem is not a triumph of common sense over ideology as you suggest. It's the triumph of ideology over common sense! She who hesitates (to communicate in the current idiom) is lost. Just so you know: by using the pronoun "she," I am including you.

May Drost
Sarnia, Ontario

Setting the record straight

Mr. Witvoet's account of the events around Putten in the fall of 1944 is not 100 percent accurate (Editorial *Connecting with our offspring*, June 28). There was no kidnapping but an attack on a German military vehicle, which caused the death of one German officer and seriously wounded another. The reprisals were ordered by General Friedrich Christiansen, the supreme commander of the German armed forces in the Netherlands, not by the SS, although the SS carried out the reprisals. Of the 602 men deported from Putten, 48 returned.

The attack near Putten must have been the second most senseless act of the Dutch resistance. The most senseless one was no doubt the railway strike from September 17, 1944, till the end of the war. This action did not really hinder the German war effort but caused the "*hongerwinter*" [winter of hunger].

James Schipper
London, Ontario

Editor's note: I got my information from a website that quotes George Duncan's *Massacres and Atrocities of WWII*. I have since checked other websites and have discovered quite a few disparate accounts. After comparing the various accounts, I come to the conclusion that your account seems to be the more correct one. However, your abbreviated account does not tell the whole story.

First of all, 661 men were deported from Putten (not 602), but 59 were later released in Amersfoort. Of the 602 men transported from Amersfoort, 13 jumped from the train, bringing the number who arrived at the Neuengamme concentration camp at 589. Of those, 48 returned after the war. That means that 541 men died in concentration camps. But the number of victims climbs when we factor in that six men and one woman were initially shot during the razzia in Putten. The total number of those who died at the hands of the Germans then comes to 548. Now, if we add to that number another five men who died from malnutrition soon after they returned to Putten, the number comes to 552 men and one woman. This is, in fact, close to the number you end up with as well, but your account misses some important details.

Thank you for forcing me to dig a little deeper.

Bert Witvoet

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Protestants repent for churches' role in oppressing First Nations

Stephen Brown

Grand Rapids, Michigan (ENI) – A global Protestant body representing 80 million Christians has issued an apology for the role played by churches in perpetrating abuse against Native Americans, First Nations and other indigenous peoples.

"We . . . repent of our history littered with ways in which we have betrayed Gospel values of justice, fairness, and love for our neighbour . . . by the confiscation of land, and mass killings," delegates at the founding meeting of the World Communion of Reformed Churches said in a June 26 statement.

The June 18-28 gathering in Grand Rapids, in the state of Michigan, took place on the traditional territory of Native American peoples, delegates noted.

In their statement, they said they hoped that through

Native Americans and ecumenical leaders crossing a bridge in downtown Grand Rapids.

"genuine repentance" they would have courage to repair broken relationships and begin new paths of reconciliation. They also said they were repenting for manifesting, "cultural, economic and theological arrogance", and the way their church structures had "perpetrated abuse."

The Rev. Bill Thomas, a delegate from the United Church of Canada, noted however, "This has to be the beginning of a process that may be generations in coming to fruition."

Several events throughout the meeting stressed the role of Native Americans, indigenous and First Nation peoples.

Richard Twiss, a Lakota Sioux

A centrepiece was a keynote address by Native American Richard Twiss. He said churches had been "willing partners" in the oppression of Native Americans and that Christianity and Christian mission had been used to reinforce cultural assimilation.

The Grand Rapids meeting marked the merger of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council, two bodies that had an overlapping membership.

Organizers of the gathering, called a uniting general council, said similar global Reformed gatherings had always tried, "to respond to unfinished issues of justice," in the places where the meetings have taken place.

"Certainly the issue of justice, reconciliation, making right the relationship between Native Americans, First Nations people and those of us who are basically immigrants to this society remains a critical issue," the Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), and the outgoing president of WARC, told ENInews.

A key moment came on the first day of the meeting, when Native American representatives were presented with a U.S. Marines' sword that had been fashioned into a ploughshare.

Reformed leaders said this was to represent a text from the Old Testament of the Bible (Micah 4:3) that looks to a time when, nations shall "beat their swords into ploughshares, and … nation shall not lift up sword against nation."

In response, Mike Peters, a minister and member of the Odawa people, presented the Reformed leaders with a replica of the medal given in 1850 to family members of the chief of his nation who signed a peace treaty with the United States. "It was just spontaneous," Peters told ENInews. "When I saw the sword, the spirit spoke to me and said I needed to give them the peace medal as a sign that I trust them."

Kirkpatrick described the gift as, "the most deeply moving moment in this uniting general council." He acknowledged, however, that not all Native American and First Nations peoples who were approached "were of one mind" about taking part in the meeting.

"There is obviously among many North American people a sense of betrayal by the Christian church, [and] by white society, and a sense they have often been invited for celebratory, symbolic actions without substantive change," he said.

Delegates in their statement also apologised for presenting forms of worship, music and biblical interpretation as the only "legitimate liturgical expressions," and teaching theology and church history in ways that disregarded the contributions of Native Americans and other indigenous communities.

The WCRC groups some 230 Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed, United and Uniting churches in 108 countries.

Technically Speaking
Derek Schuurman

Technology and globalization

When I was young I recall the delight in first discovering my grandfather's old shortwave radio. Amid the static and chirps and buzzes I would spin the tuning dial, stumbling on different radio stations originating from around the globe. It was amazing that behind the front panel sat glowing vacuum tubes which were somehow able to pick up distant signals from exotic locales like Moscow, Taiwan and Hilversum in the Netherlands.

It was not that long ago that radio and the telegraph provided the only links between different continents. With the development of digital communications, satellites and the Internet, it has now become routine to communicate with distant websites with the click of a mouse. This technology has enabled the emergence of globalization, a trend whereby local societies are increasingly becoming integrated into a worldwide network and a global economy. The Internet is itself an example of a global technology.

Many people have associated the Internet with techno-utopian claims. This is not new. In the mid-nineteenth century, the advent of the trans-Atlantic telegraph brought many optimistic predictions and was expected by some to lead to world peace. Authors Briggs and Maverick wrote in their 1858 book *The Story of the Telegraph* the following:

"How potent a power, then, is the telegraphic destined to become in the civilization of the world! This binds together by a vital cord all the nations of the earth. It is impossible that old prejudices and hostilities should longer exist, while such an instrument has been created for an exchange of thought between all the nations of the earth."

False predictions

A popular slogan suggested that the global telegraph would "make muskets into candlesticks." Throughout history periods of technological development have been accompanied by utopian predictions. However, the notion that peace and prosperity will come with communications technology is misplaced. This is an example of informationism, which is the belief in the collection and dissemination of information as a route to social progress and personal happiness. Projects such as the "one laptop per child" project (www.laptop.org) are working to provide every poor child in the world with a rugged, low-cost, low-power laptop. While the desire to help the poor is laudable, it would be misguided to think that worldwide access to information technology will ever solve the problems of the human condition.

Globalization is a controversial issue and comes with its own issues of inequality, justice, and environmental degradation. But is there anything good about globalization? The respected Reformed Christian economist Bob Goudzwaard has suggested that the question is not whether Christians should be for or against globalization; instead, the question should be: What kind of globalization should Christians support? Christians need to accept responsibility for the harmful economic structures in which they participate and to seek justice. The possibilities of globalization need to include help for the world's poor and international finance to help developing economies. Clearly, not all aspects of globalization are entirely evil, and I suspect it is part of the normal unfolding of creation.

Ironic development

Technology and globalization have also impacted missions. The "ends of the earth" are no longer so far away thanks to satellites and digital communications. Computers have certainly helped to accelerate the spread of the gospel. Sophisticated linguistics software has been a tremendous aid in Bible translation. It is interesting to note that according to the Bible the many languages around the world have their origin in the story of the tower of Babel – a story of how people were punished for placing their trust in technology. Now advanced technology is being used to help bridge linguistic boundaries to bring the gospel into every language and place. Organizations such as Wycliffe are actively translating the gospel into every language. In particular, Wycliffe has adopted a vision that by the year 2025, together with partners worldwide, work will have begun on translating the gospel into every language that needs it. This is a fascinating development, since the need for everyone to hear the gospel in their own language is one of the preconditions for the return of Jesus Christ. And when he does return, we will witness a great multitude that no one can count, gathered before the Lamb from every tribe, nation and tongue.

Dr. Derek Schuurman (dschuur@csredeemer.ca) is computer science professor at Redeemer University College. He and his wife and four children live in Hamilton, Ontario.

News

20 years of surveys reveal CRC trends, good and bad

Chris Meehan

The Christian Reformed Church in North America is aging, becoming better educated and is in need of enhanced spiritual development for its members, according to a study whose results were presented to Synod 2010.

Staff from Calvin College's Center for Social Research presented the findings of the CRC's most recent denominational membership survey.

The survey is part of a series that have been done every five years for the past 20 years, said Rodger Rice, the survey coordinator.

The survey was conducted via the Internet and included responses from 1,434 individuals from 120 randomly selected congregations, making it one of the most comprehensive surveys of its kind ever commissioned by the CRC.

"We now have a 20-year peek at changes occurring across the denomination," said Rice. "What we have is a photograph of the CRC family."

Among other things, that picture shows declining loyalty to the denomination among its members, with older members reporting a greater level of loyalty than younger members.

"Members of the GenX generation (persons in their 20s and early 30s) show the lowest level of loyalty. GenXers are very suspicious of institutions such as marriage and the church," said Neil Carlson, assistant director of the Center for Social Research.

That portrait also shows a church that continues to put a great deal of significance on the Bible; whose membership is diversifying from its Dutch roots; and that no longer draws a large number of people to Sunday evening services.

Only 20 percent use Christian schools

Other highlights include information that less than 20 percent of all households in the CRC have children attending Christian schools and that there is a gradual increase in the median income of families in the denomination.

One concern that showed up in the survey is that many of those who participated said that church leadership is not speaking to them personally about their spiritual life. "This could be a finding that encourages household visits," said Rice.

The survey also found a decline in the frequency of devotional practices such as private prayer, Bible reading, family devotions and personal devotions. In addition, it found that churches are not placing significance on reaching out and making disciples for Christ.

> ***People said they prefer more contemporary ways of learning about the faith from their pastors and church leaders.***

In order to help build healthy churches, the survey offers five recommendations:

- Spiritual development
- Stewardship Education
- Disciple-making
- Leadership training
- Keeping in touch

Rice said these recommendations can be "the new glue that replaces the old glue of cultural ethnicity (that has held the CRC together)."

Carlson said that for the first time the survey asked church members about factors – the good and bad; the healthy and the not so healthy – in their own congregation. It found strong support for more updated modes of spiritual learning as well as an emphasis on the need to bolster one's personal spiritual health.

People also said that they prefer more contemporary ways of learning about the faith from their pastors and church leaders. People prefer to listen to stories or watch audio-visual and Power Point presentations than they do hearing a "one-way" sermon by the pastor. "Even people who don't think these are good things to do" get benefit from more contemporary approaches, said Carlson. "In addition, it seems that cultural identity hardly matters as much in the church as it once did."

The survey took place online between Nov. 4 and Dec. 21, 2007. Of 120 churches invited to participate, 67 participated in some way. The churches themselves recruited the respondents, including regular attendees who are not members. The survey was offered in the Korean and Spanish languages as well as English.

Some of the anonymous comments in the survey reflect what people see as adding to the health of their congregation, synod heard. Some people expressed a fear that the church is veering from biblical teaching, or expressed a desire to know more about the agencies of the church as well as become better informed about what the CRC believes and why.

To read the final report online go to www.crcna.org/research.

My first money from biomass

I checked four of my dictionaries to see if any of them has a definition for the word *biomass*. It's not there. My *Webster's New World Encyclopedia* (1992) does have a definition, but it says nothing about biomass being a renewable energy source.

It's only in the last year or two that the word has sprung up from nowhere. The best definition of biomass that I can come up with is "a common name for organic materials used as renewable energy sources such as wood, crops, and waste."

It can also be described as a biological material derived from living, or recent living, organisms such as wood, waste, hydrogen and alcohol fuels. Biomass is common plant material grown to generate electricity or produce heat.

A year and a half ago, a marketing research company called and invited me to a meeting in town. They wanted input from 10-12 participants regarding a product. We weren't made aware of the topic or product we would be discussing or who was paying us. Each participant would be paid $75. It sounded intriguing. I thought we'd be answering questions on things we use in the house, or foods we eat – that kind of stuff. The marketing people called the day before the event to remind me of the meeting. It sounded very well organized.

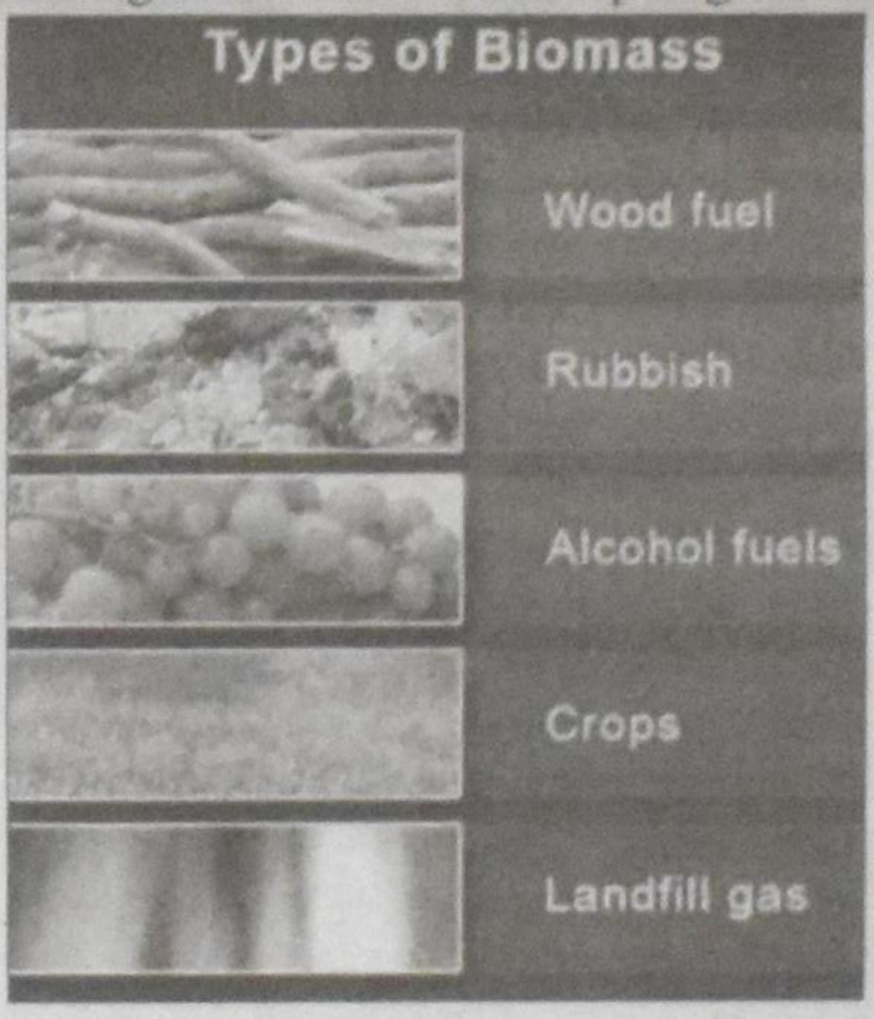
Alternative to coal

Ten people from various backgrounds – including a university student, a store owner selling wood stoves, a homemaker and three retired teachers – met in a back room of a restaurant all wondering why they were picked for the project. I learned later that I was there because of my agricultural knowledge.

We were given a blank piece of paper and were asked to write down what we knew about biomass. Most of the participants had to guess. The papers were collected after we read out our answers.

Ontario Power Generation (OPG) was exploring the feasibility of replacing the coal it currently burns for energy at the Atikokan, Nanticoke, Lambton and Thunder Bay power plants with forest and agricultural based biomass.

Even though coal is the cheapest energy source in making electricity, the provincial government's mandate to end burning of coal in Ontario sprang from serious environmental and health concerns associated with the fossil fuel.



Biomass, on the other hand, is considered a carbon neutral alternative to coal. Agricultural residue and forest products are considered neutral because they absorb as much greenhouse gases while they are growing as they emit during combustion.

By the end of 2014, Ontario's four coal-fired plants will need to find a new purpose and biomass could be their new lease on life. Starting in 2012, there will be a market for 2 million tons of biomass per year as Ontario moves away from coal.

Agricultural residue

My answer to the question about biomass was correct. It's a renewable energy that can be grown and harvested, such as switchgrass. I had been keeping an eye on a field of switchgrass that was growing in the area.

Fuel can also come from corn stover, hemp, sorghum, sugarcane, straw, spoiled grains, willow, poplar and from wood pellets made from leftover forest products. In order for agricultural residue to be burned at any of the coal-fired power plants, it needs to be condensed into pellet-form.

One of the participants asked why people from our area were picked and not folks from Toronto and other major cities. We were told that Renfrew County (Eastern Ontario) is the ideal place for biomass to be produced. We have forest, agricultural land and lots of poorer soil – all ideal for energy production.

The research company had to find out what the people knew about biomass, what they thought of it as an alternative to burning coal, and if there was a need for education and publicity.

We answered many questions and gave our opinions during the session. We didn't get any handouts on biomass or any promotional material. At the end of the session we got an envelope with $75 in cash – for the 90 minutes.

My first money from biomass!

Maynard van der Galien (maynard@renfrew.net) is a Renfrew-area farmer and agriculture columnist.

CRC Synod 2010

Two Canadians among synod's four officers

Wendy Gritter, Peter Slofstra, Aldon Kuiper, William Verhoef

PALOS HEIGHTS, Illinois – When the general synod of the Christian Reformed Church began this year's week-long meetings on June 14, the main order of business on Day 1 was the electing of officers: a president, vice-president and two clerks. Not one delegate to this year's synod had previously served as an officer, so all four officers chosen were rookies at their positions. But they were not short on experience: among them they had 20 synods under their belts.

Rev. Aldon Kuiper, pastor of Trinity CRC in Rock Valley, Iowa, was elected president. He had been to synod nine times and had chaired advisory committees during several of those.

Rev. Peter Slofstra was vice-president. He is pastor of Hope Fellowship CRC in Courtice, Ontario. He has been a synod delegate three times and serves on the denomination's Ecumenical Relations Committee.

Rev. William Verhoef had not planned to be at this year's synod but came as an alternate when one of the delegates from his classis could not attend. Verhoef, pastor of The River CRC in Redlands, Calif., served as first clerk.

Wendy Gritter, the second Canadian among the officers served as synod's second clerk – but this was her first synod. She is an elder at Community CRC of Meadowvale in Mississauga, Ontario, and is the executive director of New Direction Ministries.

All of the officers were willing and eager to serve but initially a little overwhelmed. Asked what they thought would be the big issues this year they mentioned the Belhar Confession, the desire of the Faith Formation committee's desire to allow participation in the Lord's Supper without a public profession of faith, and proposed revisions to the denomination's Church Order.

"I think the pastoral heart of our denomination will show in our discussion of migrant workers," Slofstra said as synod began. "People will be watching for that."

Youth observers

Delegates discuss ways to engage youth and the church

Roxanne Van Farowe

About 50 people gathered at the beginning of CRC synod week for a discussion on youth ministry in the Christian Reformed Church.

"Our students graduate from high school and graduate from church in many cases," said Ty Hogue, youth pastor at Harderwyk Ministries, Holland, Mich. "We need to help them retain a living and active faith once they graduate from high school."

Hogue presented a concept paper of the recently-formed Youth Ministries Task Force which aims to create a "coherent youth ministry plan" for the denomination.

The task force identified three key needs:

helping adolescents live in today's culture
equipping adolescents for discipleship
encouraging congregations to engage adolescents.

Elder Ken Douma of Classis Lake Superior said that often there is a disconnect between adolescents and the older generations in the church. "We should be focusing more on adults, teaching them how to live their faith in ways that kids will engage with," he asserted.

Elder David Stewart of Classis Columbia said that young people need to have real roles in the church. "[At my church] we have youth on every church committee," said Stewart, who pastors the youth at Sunnyside [Washinton] CRC. "We've started to see a shift in the mentality. It's becoming their church, as equals to the adults."

The group also discussed ways to make choosing curriculum simpler and ways to build relationships with youth. "What if every kid had five adults who knew their name and cared about them?" said Hogue.

Plenary session, Rev. Aldon Kuiper presiding

Children at Communion:

Public faith profession not necessary for Communion participation

Synod endorsed the principle that baptized members with age- and ability-appropriate faith in Jesus are welcome to participate at that Lord's Supper without necessarily making a public profession of faith. But the body also reminded churches that they should not change their practices to implement this until the Church Order is changed to formally allow this. Synod received a draft of a document called "Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith" and encouraged churches to study it.

The Faith Formation Committee of the CRC has been discussing this topic and a wide range of issues related to faith formation, at the request of synod, for the past few years. It is to present its final report in 2012, but that report may actually come next year instead.

The CRC has required that children make a formal Profession of Faith, articulating their belief in Christ, before they can take part in the Lord's Supper. But churches have developed different approaches in how they handle the issue, in part as a response to requests by parents who believe their children are ready to participate in the sacrament.

In some congregations, young children are allowed to partake of the sacrament as long as they express some belief in Christ, while other churches require that children make a Profession of Faith before participating.

"We are trying to be deliberative and approve a single principle that all baptized members who come with age- and ability-appropriate faith in Jesus Christ are welcome at the Lord's table," said Rev. John Witvliet, chair of the Faith Formation Committee.

In addition, the committee asked synod to give permission to children to take part in the Lord Supper as long as "they obey the scriptural commands about participation (to examine themselves) in an age- and ability-appropriate way, under the supervision of elders."

Hope and confusion

Some delegates said they were uncomfortable with making it easier for children to take part in the sacrament, in part because they felt the changes could open the door to "infant communion."

At issue is how to best discern if a young person understands the saving grace bestowed by Christ in his death on the cross and resurrection, as well as whether a young person can examine him- or herself properly in order to determine readiness to participate in the sacrament. One question brought up was whether a Profession of Faith will any longer be necessary.

Rev. Darren Roorda, a delegate from Classis Huron, said that churches are experiencing "terrible confusion" over how to best handle this issue. "Is a Profession of Faith required? If not, we will need it in some other form."

Rev. James Peterson, a delegate from Classis Central Plains, asserted, "We need to welcome children to the Lord's Table. We train 10-year-olds at our church to participate in the Lord's Supper and it is a beautiful practice."

In its recommendations the Faith Formation Committee said that a formal Profession of Faith prior to participation in the Lord's Supper "is not required by Scripture or the Confessions." At the same time, a "formal public Profession of Faith is a vital practice for faith formation and is one pastoral approach to consider prior to participation in the Lord's Supper."

Adapted from Chris Meehan's article.

CRC Synod 2010

Far-reaching migration report passed

Chris Meehan

A process that started several years ago when a Christian Reformed congregation in Zeeland, Mich., wanted to know if it was okay to accept an undocumented Mexican worker for membership wrapped up on the floor of synod with a standing ovation for a far-reaching report on "Migration of Workers."

"This report is the product of pain and cultural misunderstanding," said Teresa Renkema, chair of the synodical committee that produced the report. "We were not culturally alert. This report is our best effort. It is not a political statement. It is about what the church can do as it relates to the stranger among us."

The document adopted by synod will be used as a guide and as the foundation for wide-ranging educational and advocacy materials and efforts by the Christian Reformed Church to address the challenges faced by undocumented persons in the United States and Canada.

The issue began after the Zeeland church asked its classis what it should do about bringing the worker from Mexico into their congregation. That classis said they could accept the membership but the handling of the situation was seen by some as being in large part about church rules, regulations and discipline. The local Hispanic community accused the church of "cultural insensitivity."

The issue was then brought to a previous synod. That body apologized to the worker in question for how the situation was handled, and began taking a broader look at the issue of migration of workers. Three years in the making, the report asked synod to declare that "all people are created in the image of God and are to be treated as such regardless of circumstances under which the church encounters individuals, or of a given person's race, background or legal status."

A high-profile issue

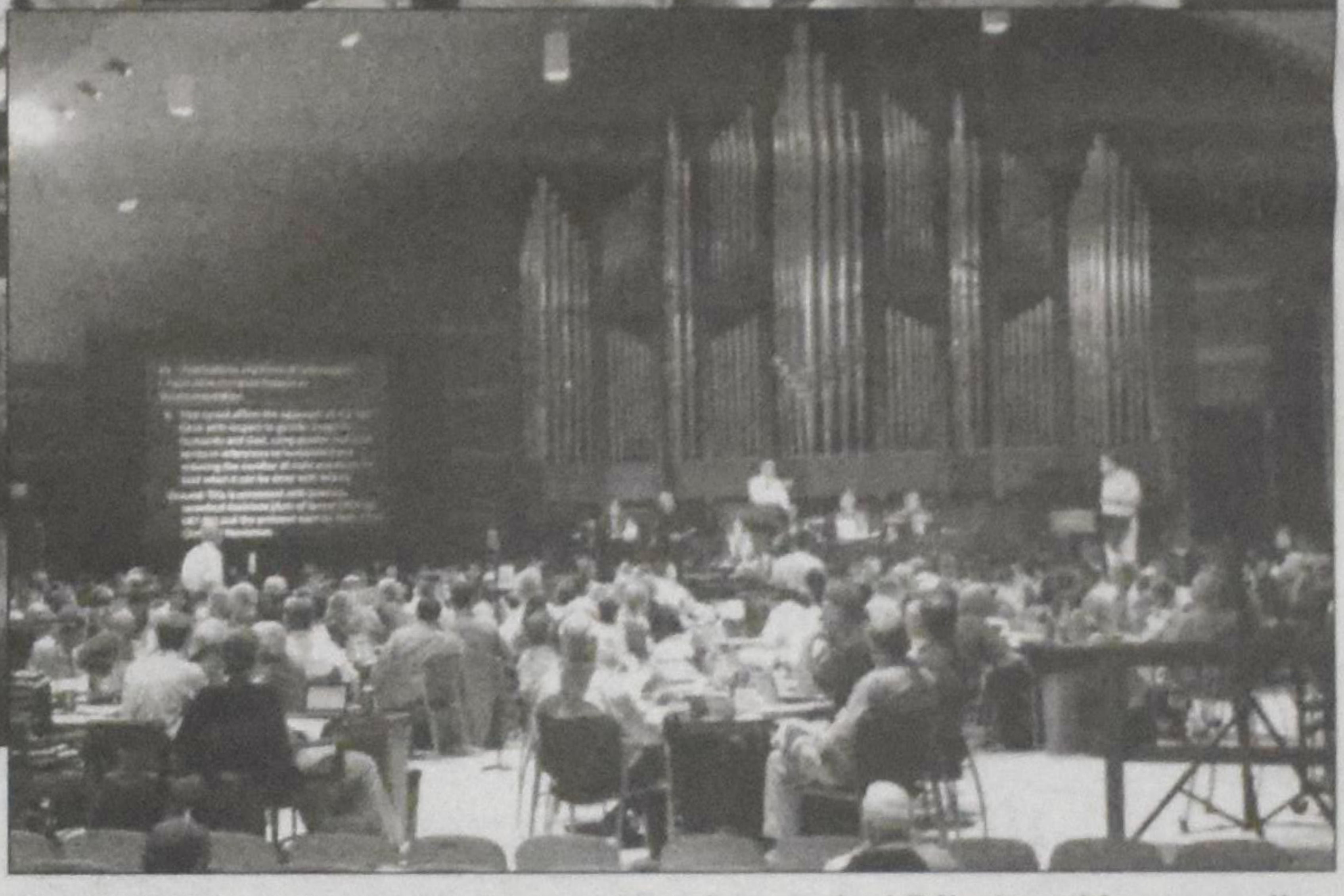
After listening to the lengthy discussion on the floor of synod, synod president Rev. Aldon Kuiper remarked that the issue of churches getting involved on different levels with undocumented persons seems to be the case all over North America. "From the stories, it is clear that this issue affects our denomination all across North America," said Kuiper.

Bret McAtee, a delegate from Classis Lake Erie, said that compassion is important. "But what about the others who are touched by this issue of immigration?" he asked. "People wonder how this issue will or won't impact jobs for persons who are in this country legally."

The Migration of Workers report asks synod to "urge the Christian Reformed Church through its assemblies and agencies, to affirm the need to reach out in hospitality and compassion to immigrant people, and that synod further encourage churches to display this ministry concern through actions."

The report asks synod to "encourage congregations and their individual members to speak out against, and seek reform, laws and practices concerning the treatment of immigrants that appear to be unduly harsh or unjust."

An addendum to the report asks for formation of a committee to study how to best advocate for immigration reform. It also urged synod to ask the CRC's Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action and the Committee for the Contact with the Government (in Canada) to seek and present to synod ways in which advocacy can best be accomplished.



Synod initiates new study re: creation stewardship

Chris Meehan

At synod's request the CRC's board of trustees will establish a task force to compile a biblically based, Reformed perspective on our role as stewards of God's creation. The report should identify "our position of creation stewardship, including climate change, applicable to this millennium for congregations, society and our global gospel partners," synod said.

Henry Eygenraam, reporter for the advisory committee that brought the recommendation to synod, said that "it is imperative for the Christian Reformed Church to show our desire to stand with Christians throughout the world as partners in the task of stewardship, and to be called to engage more fully in the task of understanding and practicing stewardship."

Synod spent several hours discussing the issue, with some delegates expressing unhappiness with the aspect of the church writing a document relating to climate change.

"No one here challenges our need to care for creation," said Bret McAtee, a delegate from Classis Lake Erie. "But I question the need for a task force to identify a biblical and Reformed perspective on climate change."

Several delegates argued that the science linking activities by human beings to global climate change is not solid enough for the church to be venturing into this area. But other delegates argued that the church's job is not to determine the causes of such issues, but to speak on what the Bible says about caring for creation.

"People are watching us. There are those who think evangelical Christians don't care about God's creation," said Rev. Thomas Niehof, a delegate from Classis Northcentral Iowa.

After lengthy debate, synod decided to ask the Board of Trustees to establish a task force to offer members of the church information on what the Bible teaches about care of the earth. And synod wants the whole denomination to give "greater attention to the issue of creation stewardship in its education and implementation efforts among CRC members and congregations in advocacy efforts at local, national and global levels."

'Declaration F' is dead

Synod also addressed what is known as Declaration F, passed in 1991. Since then it has restricted what CRC members can teach on the issue of creation of humankind. It reads, "The church declares … that the clear teaching of Scripture and of our confessions on the uniqueness of human beings as imagebearers of God rules out the espousing of all theorizing that posits the reality of evolutionary forebears of the human race."

Prof. John Cooper from Calvin Theological Seminary said he has taught a class on the biblical teachings regarding creation. While he holds strongly to orthodox beliefs on the subject, the declaration prohibited him from offering his students another point of view – namely that God may have included animals as a means of leading to the creation of man.

Removing this declaration means he will be free to present a wider range of information to his students, he said. "The church should not bind the consciences of its members beyond what is the clear and indubitable teaching of Scripture and the creeds," says the report brought to synod.

Other documents and declarations are in effect that "sufficiently safeguard the church's confession with respect to the uniqueness of humanity as image-bearers of God," says the report that was passed by synod.

Redeemer University College to host Synod 2012

Synod 2010 accepted invitations from Madison Square Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., and the Ancaster, Ontario, CRC to host the next two synods.

Synod 2011 will meet at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Synod 2012 will meet at Redeemer University College in Ancaster.

Leaning walls and tottering fences

"How long will you assault a man? Would all of you throw him down – this leaning wall, this tottering fence?" (Psalm 62:3)
"...he is my fortress, I will not be shaken." (Psalm 62:6)

Cathy Smith

The giants in my world are toppling. Their hip bones are snapping, their eyes are clouding, and their songs are growing faint. They are succumbing, and I cannot bear to watch. Lately I keep going to their funerals.

They were the pillars of my childhood – post-war Dutch immigrants, rising fresh-faced from the aftermath, confident men and capable women, galvanized by their belief that in Canada hard work could engender opportunity. In a wave of brash togetherness, they challenged an uncertain future, crossed the ocean headlong, and framed their churches, schools and new lives at full tilt. The men smoked pipes and Players, read *De Wachter* and *The Calvinist Contact* and declaimed their strong opinions about church and politics to each other, Canadians not being particularly interested. The women curled their hair with bobby pins, wore aprons and cherry red lipstick, hung out the laundry on icy clotheslines until frozen stiff, polished the Sunday shoes every Saturday and wrote letters home.

Home/Church

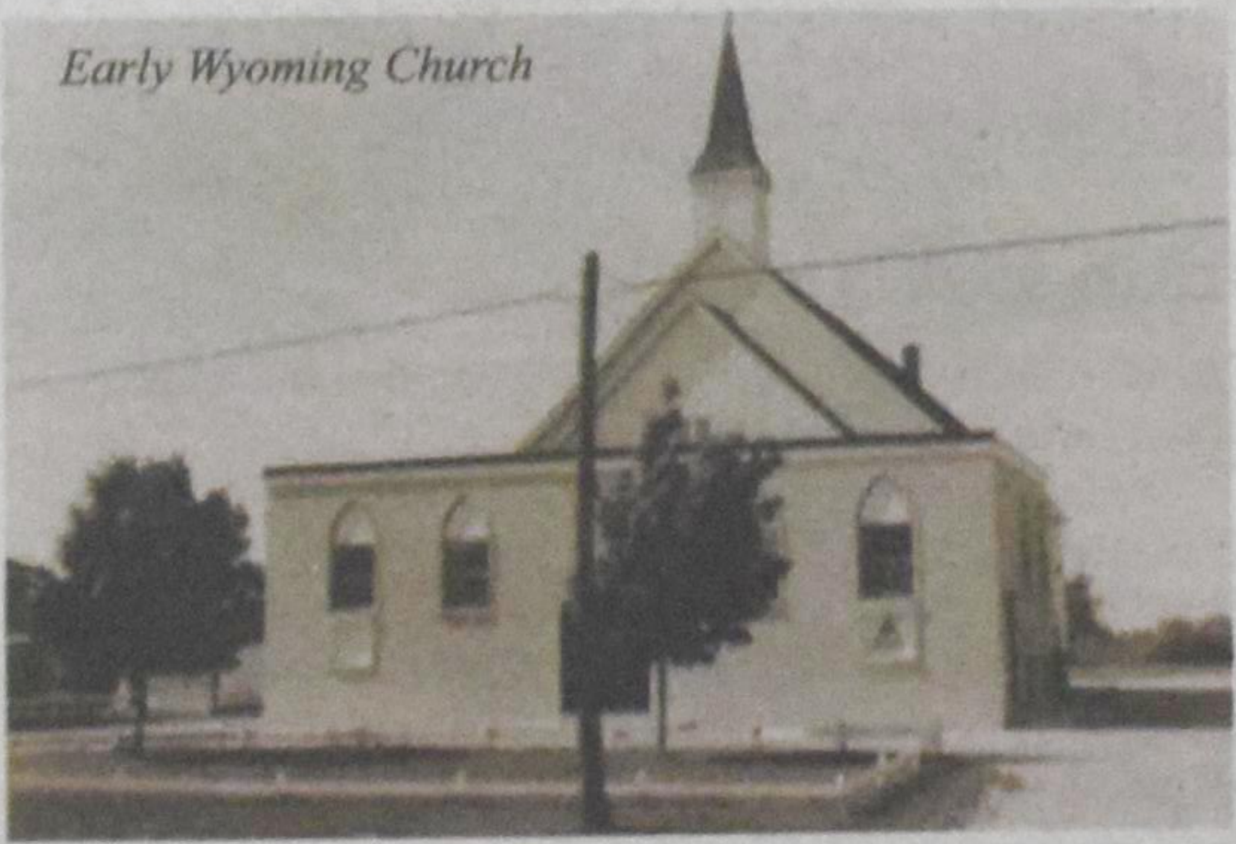
We laid to rest another one today. Husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather. A Christian man who served the Lord as best he could for as long as he could. Like those other colossal figures of my youth, he was a proud man, driven to be a success in his adopted country, firm in his role as the head of the household, determined to keep his church pure. He had his tempestuous side, even more so when a stroke six years ago robbed him of his vigour and abilities.

His stricken body was a prison. There was no gradual resignation to his condition. He raged against his infirmities and frailties until the end. His impassioned refrain: "I want to go home."

Siep's funeral today reminded us of his gentler side and happier days. He had an artist's love of nature, drawing close to God in the craggy Rocky Mountains and in the lilacs and hummingbirds of his own garden. He nurtured show pigeons with tenderness. He was a woodworker with a meticulous hand. A businessman and a risk-taker. My brothers, who spent a lot of time with Siep and his son, Steve, remember a worm farm in their garage! He enjoyed watching hockey with the boys on Saturday night. But, most of all, at his core, like so many others of his immigrant generation, Siep was a churchman.

That fiercely possessive love for the church is what chokes me up at all these funerals. These immigrants eagerly mortared their sweat, dollars and souls into their churches. The original members of my church logged 2,910 hours of free labour to construct our building. The countless hours donated by the wives who made the meals and tended to the children so their husbands could hammer and nail a "house for God" were not logged. That invisible sacrificial labour sparks a wry smile. It was a communal effort, nonetheless.

This was not the "let's worship God in the great outdoors" generation of the seventies nor the church-hopping generation of today. They loved their church so much that they almost forgot it was God's church. They were invested in every detail of the building – from the colour of the drapes to the tulip varieties planted in the front flower-bed. Men served countless terms on "consistory." Four years in, one year out. Women bustled their large families to church twice a Sunday in neatly pressed shirts and immaculate dresses, hair slicked back or tidily braided. At one time I might have dismissed it. Snubbed it as habit, tribalism, works righteousness. I'm older now. Now I call it love.



Early Wyoming Church

Love

Siep was responsible for constructing the parsonage that stands next to our church here in Wyoming. As an elder, he took his turn reading sermons in Dutch when a pastor wasn't available. He served as a volunteer treasurer for twenty consecutive years. Two decades of painstakingly entering numbers into the books by hand and personally delivering the paycheques to the custodian and the pastor.

He sang in the choir for decades, too. My brothers and I will never forget his singing face, his mouth a perfect oval as he sang the hymns he loved with unparalleled gusto. We didn't know anyone else who could sing that way! He never learned to articulate the English "th." How's Caty today?" he would inquire at church, smiling at me with big friendly brown eyes.

The pastor preached on Psalm 62 at Siep's funeral. After the message, we sang "When Peace like a River." The voices of the congregation swelled mightily, united in love, love for Siep and his family, love for the church, love for the Lord. The surge in volume was unmistakable.

Not me. I wasn't singing. My throat was clogged: struck dumb like Zechariah by the glorious audacity of that crescendo. In 1954 when my forebears positioned the concrete blocks in the trenches – proudly laying the foundation for their new church home – sin, heartache and tragedy moved right in, too. Today, at Siep's funeral, more than fifty years later, every pew in the sanctuary could groan with a heavy weight of sorrow. A score of widows and widowers mourning their own losses. Parents grieving children taken too soon. Children struggling with life-long impairments. Betrayals by brothers and friends. Pre-marital sex. Unplanned pregnancies. Divorce. Bounced cheques, skewed tax returns, and loans never repaid. Suicide. Adultery. Spousal abuse. Straying family members. Alcoholism. Gossip. Envy. Even murder. Siep's own niece lost her life at the hand of her husband. No reason why Job's wife couldn't stride right into our fellowship at that very moment and legitimately cry out her bitter advice: "Curse God and die."

But there we were anyway, bruised and bleeding, defiantly belting out a song about peace like a river. Leaning walls and tottering fences absurdly claiming victory. Not resigned to our aching woundedness, but raging against the prison of our own sorry lives. Daring God to free us and affirm our hope: "O Lord, haste the day when our faith shall be sight." All of us together one desperate Jacob: "I will not let you go until you bless me." All of us one stubborn Job: "I know that my Redeemer lives." All of us together one anguished Siep: "I want to go home."

No giants

They weren't giants, after all, Siep and his generation. They served the Lord as best they could in the world they were given. His children and I are doing the best we can in the world we find ourselves in. Sin still easily entangles. Trouble still plunks down uninvited beside us. But we sing, we believe, we wrestle with God brazenly until he leaves his mark on us. We rise up from our Peniel pews and go forth, re-named the Redeemed. We take our turn at mortaring love into a spiritual house.

Siep's suffering was consecrated with that love. There were cards and prayers from the classmates of his granddaughter at the Christian school, cards and prayers from his grandson's catechism class, cards and prayers from his church family. A large-print bulletin was produced for him every week. There was his daughter's friend who faithfully wheeled him around the nursing home, on days when he was cheerful and on days when he was anything but.

There was the housekeeping aide, my sister, who sought to connect with Siep as often as she could while at work. He called her and everyone else "lieve" (little loved one), that sweet Dutch diminutive, a touchingly affectionate echo from the past. Once, on her coffee break, she joined him at a Sunday chapel service. His wheelchair was in the back row, so it was a simple matter to slide in beside him for a few minutes. He was slumped and uninvolved. She held the hymnbook and sang, embarrassed at how loud she sounded amongst all the other spidery thin voices. Then, to her amazement and shock, Siep suddenly began to quaver the familiar lyrics along with her: "Sometimes 'mid scenes of deepest gloom, Sometimes where Eden's bowers bloom, By waters still or troubled sea, Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me." An old song now gilded with a sacred patina. She says that moment will stay with her forever.

Have you hope?

Have you hope, oh weary saint oppressed by
life's hard trials?
Do you rest in Christ the Lord?
Keep resting yet a while.

All hard afflictions pressing down do truly lift
you high.
They pull the world out of your soul,
your hope to purify.

Look to God, and what he's done for you in
life to come.
All good things he purchased through
the blood of Christ his son.

Hope not in the things on earth; we must look
upward still.
But what he's promised to his saints
we know God will fulfill.

-Whitney Standlea

Whitney Standlea (standlea@gmail.com) is a wife and the mother of two small boys. She lives in Missouri and enjoys working with the youth at her local church.

Contemplation

Reflections from a young preacher

David Salverda

It's Sunday morning, again. Its arrival is always somewhat of a surprise for me. Each week it seems to diligently hide itself behind the twin towers of Friday and Saturday. Its inevitable arrival always seems to bewilder those strange muscles deep down in my gut.

Of course I've spent adequate time preparing for Sunday's service. I've prayed about it, I've wondered, I've studied, I've poured thoughts out on the page – but I'm still nervous. I wake up wired before the sound of my alarm and head to the bathroom. I nervously shower. I nervously change. It feels like I've had three cups of coffee already. I fidget through my notes during breakfast. "Did I really write that?" I think to myself. Good ideas on Thursday never seem like good ideas on Sunday morning. I head to the bathroom again – this time I bring my notes.

I arrive at church after a jittery commute. I'm more professional now but still nervous. I connect with an elder in a room lit by florescent lights. I hear buzzing. I can sense by the look in his eyes that Sunday morning has surprised him as well. For a couple moments we are nervous together. We pray.

And then its go time. Fly check. Deep breath. I'm walking now, but I'm not conscious of my feet hitting the ground. The organist rounds third base of the prelude and heads for home. Then silence.

"Brothers and Sisters in Christ," I say "Good morning."

From the other side of the pulpit

It's hard to describe what happens next from my side of the pulpit. I'm less nervous now for sure. I sense that I am both truly at home in my own skin and yet somewhat estranged from myself. It is me that is looking at them, but it is more than me. Whatever's happening inside, I usually sense that this is the place where I am to stand – if only for the moment.

And then it's over. God's blessing covers his people, and his people respond in praise. I walk out with the elder (whose nerves have subsided) and shed my microphone. I let out a covert sigh of relief and check my fly again before shaking hands.

But then something happens that I'm not prepared for – something as surprising as Sunday morning jumping out from behind Saturday night. While shaking hands with people, I begin to sense that, despite my seemingly "unspiritual" morning, something significant has happened here. I see tears, convicted eyes and pondering faces. I feel handshakes that communicate the softened condition of the heart within.

In this moment of revelation I let out a sigh of a different sort. Not one of relief but one of recognition. I'm reminded that Sunday morning is not about me – I'm only the nervous instrument. I remember afresh the power of the Spirit at work wherever the gospel is proclaimed. I recall the words of the prayer prayed (more out of habit than anything else) before the reading of God's word. "It must have worked!" I chuckle to myself, probably trying to deflect the weight of the moment as to remain "professional."

I know that I shouldn't be surprised by Sunday mornings, but I am. Sometime in the future, I imagine that it will all feel less surprising and more normal. Perhaps one Sunday morning my alarm will wake me up and I'll hit the snooze button a couple times, not nervous about a thing. Perhaps I'll get used to God showing up to do that thing he does through and/or in spite of me. Or perhaps I will just continue to be surprised. Who knows? I do currently know, however, that the prospect of many more Sundays to come fills me with both anxiety and excitement.

David Salverda (salverda@gmail.com) and his wife are both candidates in the Christian Reformed Church. They are currently attending First Christian Reformed Church in Hamilton, Ontario.

Leaning walls *...continued*

There was old Mr. Batterink, a long-time fellow church member, who also lived at Meadowview. Lefert (or Lee, as he is known by the staff) befriended Siep every single day of his stay there, a calming anointed presence. In the beginning, when Siep could still communicate and would strongly voice his displeasure, Lefert would remind him, "Remember, Siep, remember, we look up." And, I'm crying as I type this, at the end, when Siep was in a place far beyond speech or response, Lefert simply sat with him, holding his hand.

There were his children, freely forgiving his outbursts and anger, time after time. Hugging him, reminding him with every embrace who he was, their beloved dad and opa. There was his wife, Atty, who for six years daily came to sit with him in the sun, her chair as close to his wheelchair as possible, sharing a thermos of tea and some grapes or apple slices.

These acts of love are not to be weighed on a scale. It's not about balance, levelling the evil in our lives with the good. The cross absorbed all our evil and the empty tomb secured all our good. But God plies his own mysterious audacity – using his own sinful and desperate followers to perform ordinary wonders.

It was hard to say goodbye to Siep at the cemetery today. It was cold. It was windy. We wrapped our jackets around us tightly and huddled in. Flecks of snow slipped down from the grey clouds massed above. But, oh, if those clouds had been rolled back like a scroll, we would have seen the angels laughing and skipping with joy to usher Siep to the Master. We would have seen Christ himself smiling in welcome, leading Siep to his place in the choir. And Siep's mouth would have been open in that perfect oval, singing "It is well, it is well with my soul."

Cathy Smith (cathysmith001@hotmail.com) is a freelance writer and retired teacher living in Wyoming, Ontario. She is a member of the Wyoming Christian Reformed Church. Visit her blog, Peripheral Vision, at http://cathysmith001.wordpress.com/ for further reflections on the Christian life, short stories, gardening articles and much more.

Melanie Pyke (melpyke.com) Psalm 125: Surround *(melpyke.com)*

Great grace

It was just a blob, so many folks said,
no eyes, no hands, no feet, no head.
So, I considered at length my future instead
and on every account all I sensed was great dread
with that little one tucked inside.

It's been several years now since that fateful day
when I chose to let my heart go astray –
Oh, yes, I allowed alien hands then to slay
so that I could arise and go my own way
without that little one tucked inside.

Oh, what shall I say to that God of great good
when I see now so clearly that in all likelihood
I could have savored the joys of one's sweet childhood –
And if I could do it again, I would, yes, I would
spare that little one tucked inside.

Then somehow amidst my tears and my grief,
when I'm trembling all over inside like a leaf,
I sense something so grand it defies all belief –
For hands are extending to grant sweet relief.
Hands that had formed that one tucked inside.

Psalm 51:1-17

Chris Ahlemann

Promise kept

Oh, Lord Jesus, thank you
for not leaving us
all alone –
But for sending your sweet Spirit
to provide solace, wisdom, faithfulness
and love.
Just as you said
you would.

John 14:18

Chris Ahlemann

Columns

Intangible Things
Heidi VanderSlikke

Farewell Suzuki

On a glorious spring morning I rolled out of bed early to take one last ride with an old friend. The day had come when I would trade in my beloved Suzuki Intruder for a new motorbike. As usual, I embraced change with trembling arms.

Dew glistened on the lawn as the robins greeted the new day with their sunrise song. I pulled a pair of Dentek pants over my jeans, then zipped up my heaviest motorcycle jacket and put on warm leather gloves. I started the bike and pushed it back out of the garage. The visor of my helmet steamed up from the cold outside air.

I pulled onto the highway, and the cool breeze cleared the fog from my visor as well as my head. Every biker knows the special pleasure of riding at first light. I listened to the engine underneath me and thought how the exhaust pipes sounded a little deeper with each passing year.

In the empty streets of Harriston I waited at the stoplight, recalling the first day we brought the Intruder home. Just before my forty-ninth birthday I completed the safety course necessary to obtain my M1 licence. I had ridden a 250 Marauder all summer and finally had the confidence to graduate to a full-sized motorbike. The Intruder had only 5000 kilometres on it and looked brand-new.

Jack rode it home from the dealership for me. I practiced a few stops, starts and turns in the barnyard and then took it down Concession 6. I marveled at its power and agility and thought perhaps the front end might lift right off the ground. I felt a little like Rose in the Titanic movie, standing at the ship's bow, imagining she could fly. Before long it seemed as if I had ridden this motorbike all of my life.

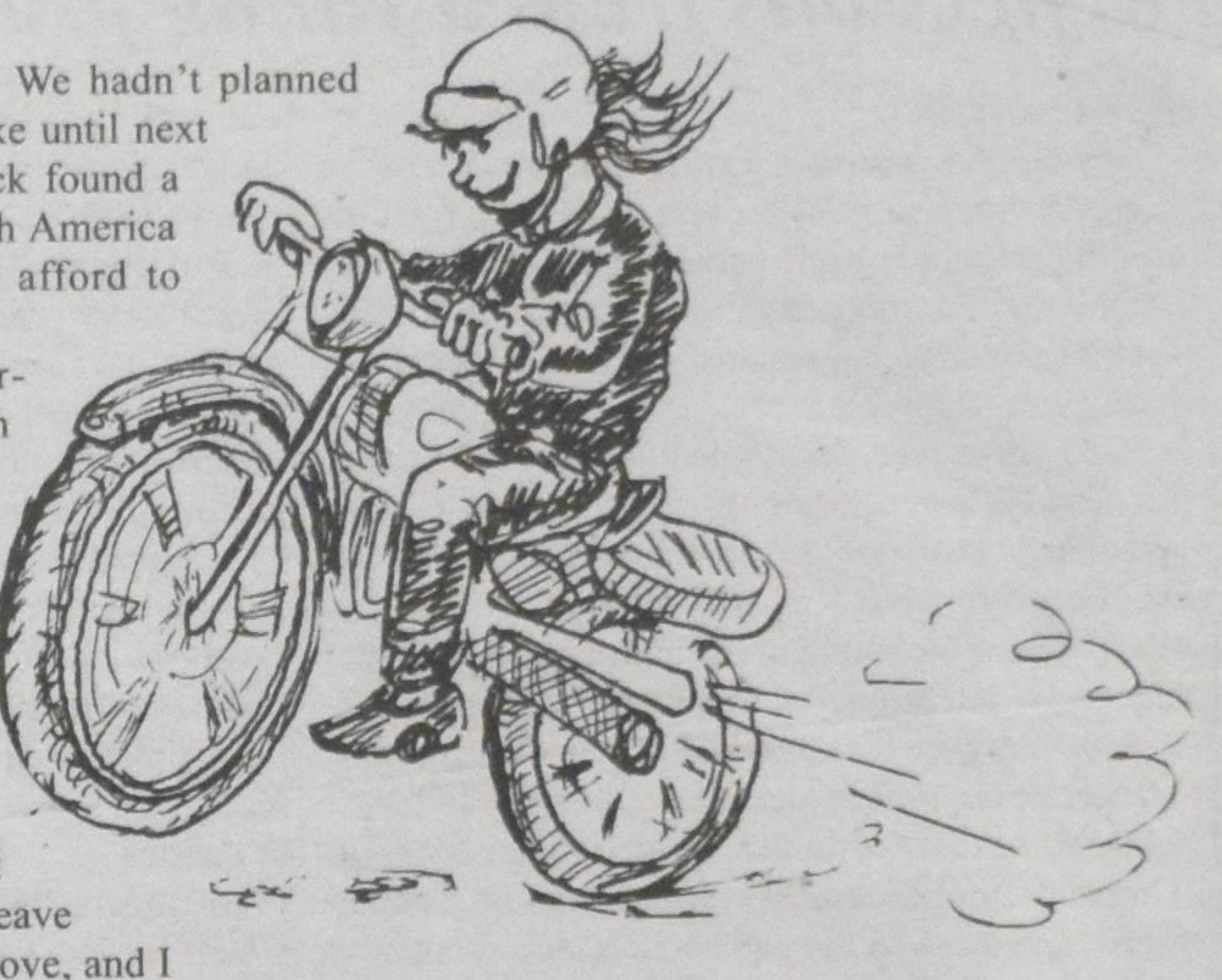
Now, past the Tim Horton's on the edge of town, I accelerated and shifted into fifth gear. I headed for the Driftwood Road. A delicate mist rose from the surrounding fields and the clear blue sky above promised a beautiful day ahead.

I thought about the holidays Jack and I had taken on our motorbikes, and our early morning starts. I remembered the misty, moisty mornings of Canada's east coast and the golden afternoons that followed.

Glancing down at the odometer, I gave thanks for all those kilometres and the wonderful memories they held. God blessed us with safety and delight through sunshine, rain, heat and cold. We traveled along rivers, lakes and ocean shorelines, through valleys, mountainsides and remote country roads and got lost in strange cities more than once.

Suddenly I remembered to appreciate my present surroundings – the curvy Huron County road stretching ahead of me, the cattle grazing on the hillsides and the rich colours and scents of spring all around. There's no need to travel far to experience the beauty of God's creation.

Back home I cleaned the bugs from my windshield and dusted off the gas tank. I wondered what the summer ahead would be like, learning to ride a whole different motorbike again. We hadn't planned to replace this bike until next year, but then Jack found a deal on a Triumph America that we couldn't afford to pass up.



At the dealership in Hamilton we strapped the America into the trailer. I glanced over my shoulder at the Intruder, standing lonely in the parking lot and wondered if I should really leave it behind. Jack drove, and I thumbed through the manual for my new bike.

In Elora we stopped and unloaded the America so Jack could ride the last half hour home. We pulled into the yard just before sundown. "You're gonna love this!" he said, as he took off his helmet.

He was right, as he often is. (Don't tell him I said that).

I climbed onto the bike, did a few circles in the yard, stopped and started several times, then took off down the Sixth. And I loved it.

I thanked the Lord for the privilege of riding such a magnificent machine and prayed that he'll keep me safe for all the travels yet to come.

Twilight descended and the mantra of my riding instructor rang in my memory from years ago. He repeated it so much it sounded like a song: "Keep your head up. Lift your eyes. Look ahead. Don't look at the ground or that's where you'll end up."

That's good advice, I think – for motorcycling and for life.

Here's to summer!

Heidi Vander Slikke (vanderslikke@everus.ca) lives in Harriston, On.

The grace of God

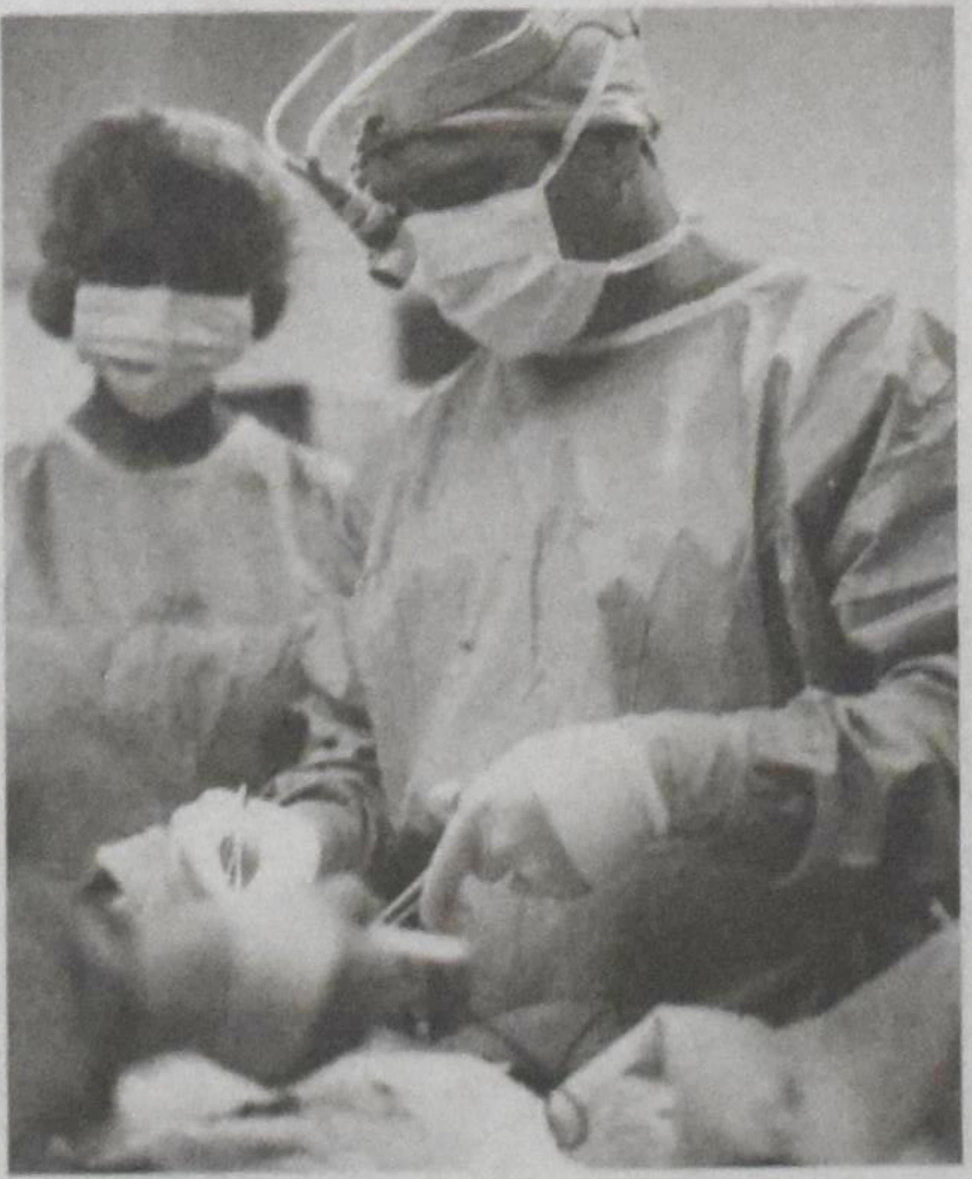
Lynn Marie-Ittner Klammer

"There but for the grace of God go I." We've all heard and said those words before, but rarely have I been so profoundly affected by them as when I sat in a family waiting room awaiting the outcome of my son's surgery.

As a patient of one of the most respected children's hospitals around, I felt confident that my son was receiving the best possible care. I was also secure in the knowledge that his surgery to have a kidney removed, while serious, was not life-threatening. Even so, my level of stress was high as they took my ten-year-old son into surgery. I knew in my mind that his chances of death were slim, but my heart felt like I was losing him, and my arms refused to let go in the last moments of that final, heart-breaking hug.

A presence so clear

As I took my chair in the waiting room, my focus narrow and intense upon my own emotional turmoil, the moments ticked by at an infinitesimally slow rate. I prayed for my son's safety and for my strength, but my fear did not subside. However, my attention was soon diverted by the words of a woman a few seats away.



"They said they have to take her leg off," the young mother said to the woman next to her, "but I just can't believe that. I have to find another way."

"Have you tried the Internet?" the other woman suggested, as she launched into her own story. As it turned out, both women had children with bone cancer. I mentally counted my blessings as yet another young woman wheeled a stroller through the door. A lovely little girl, completely bald and sleepy-eyed, sat within. The haggard mother threw a tremulous smile my way as she walked by.

An hour passed as I sat silent with my thoughts. When a doctor finally came in, it was for the couple across from me. Their son, he said, was on dialysis and would be in ICU if they wanted to see him. How small my concerns began to feel. However, I was surprised by how my concern for my son wasn't diminished, but rather transformed. My fear and anxiety was still very real and intense, but with the gift of perspective, I could now feel God's hand where I couldn't before. He was there in the toddler who played at my feet, his few tiny tufts of hair reflective of his chemotherapy treatment. He was there in the arms of the husband who enveloped his tearful wife in his arms. Somehow the sick children and their families around me demonstrated God's presence more profoundly than the health and "normal" lives of those outside the room. Why was his presence so clear here?

The chaplain who came to speak with us said that in the midst of trauma sometimes comes the greatest chance for reconciliation with God. Perhaps therein lies the answer. Do we ever feel so close to God as we do in moments of crisis? Even the nonreligious seem to turn to God – or their idea of him – then.

It's easy to lose sight of God's hand during our busy day-to-day lives. When things are going well, it's easy to forget the evil that abounds in this world and that God's light is our hope and salvation in the darkness. In moments of trauma the grace of God can shine through so clearly if we but open our eyes to see it. Evil had touched the lives around me in that waiting room, filling it with fear, sorrow and pain. But there was also friendship, empathy and love in that room as well.

Deep inside I knew that the darkness could not extinguish the light. I guess I just needed a reminder.

Lynn Marie-Ittner Klammer (pinitz@yahoo.com) is a Clinical Psychologist, educator and the bestselling author of 9 books and over 200 articles.

Reformed Thought

blog: (n) short for weblog, a website containing an online journal with reflections, comments and links.

Christian Courier *gives you a glimpse into current Reformed thinking by presenting excerpts from some of today's top blogs. Blogs are usually free-association, occasional, off-the-cuff and may not conform to the standards of print publications.'*

CHALLIES.com ...Informing The Reforming

I am a follower of Jesus Christ, a husband to Aileen and a father to three young children. I write books and blogs for fun while doing web design and consulting for a living. I worship and serve at Grace Fellowship Church and edit *Discerning Reader*.

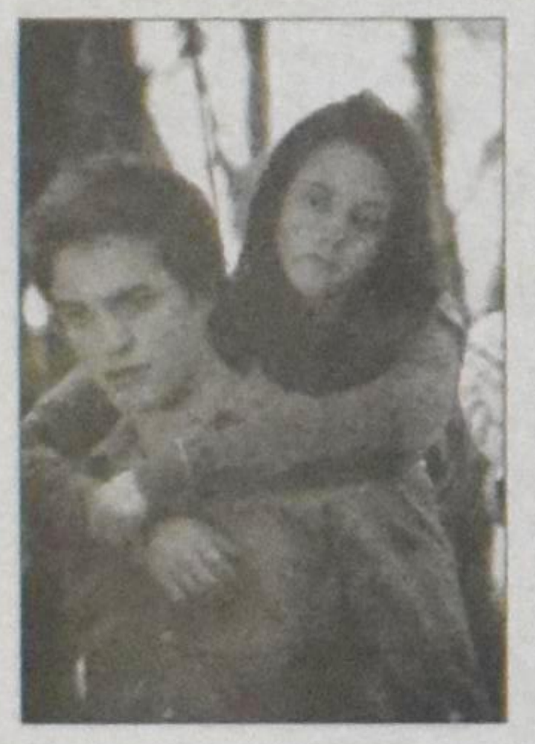
A La Carte (6/30)

Manute Bol's Radical Christianity – It was interesting to see an article like this one in the *Wall Street Journal*. "Manute Bol, who died last week at the age of 47, is one player who never achieved redemption in the eyes of sports journalists. His life embodied an older, Christian conception of redemption that has been badly obscured by its current usage."

The Yahoo Word List – Yahoo has a very helpful resource for "terms related to communications, technology, branding, and other topics that our U.S. editors have encountered frequently." It's a great place to check for the spelling of terms, the proper way to do acronyms, and so on.

Corporate Sin – I don't know how I missed this article when it was first posted a couple of weeks ago. In it John Dyer talks about our responsibility in the BP disaster. "If we've ever complained about rising gas prices or the cost of air travel, we are participating in the world that drives companies like BP to cut costs. We want them to. We need them to. We don't really want to know what BP is doing as long as it keeps our vehicles fueled and our computers powered. Not unlike Al Gore, who talks about the environment from the comfort of his personal jet, we love to talk about BP's problems while consuming the product they provide at every opportunity."

Shedding Some Light on *Twilight* – Mary Kassian interacts with the first two *Twilight* movies, suggesting what it is about them that has drawn in so many girls (and women). "It's not surprising that young girls are falling for [Edward]. But sadly, their enthusiasm for being the leading lady in a heart-gripping romance lacks discernment. The movie grips them at such a deep emotional level that they shrug off the glaring warnings that indicate that this particular relationship is unhealthy. It's a counterfeit version of a fairy-tale romance. It looks good and attractive on the surface, but the underlying darkness in Edward will most certainly lead to disaster for Bella. It may go well for a time, but in the end, it will kill her. She's playing with fire, and she's going to get burned."



Posted by Tim Challies

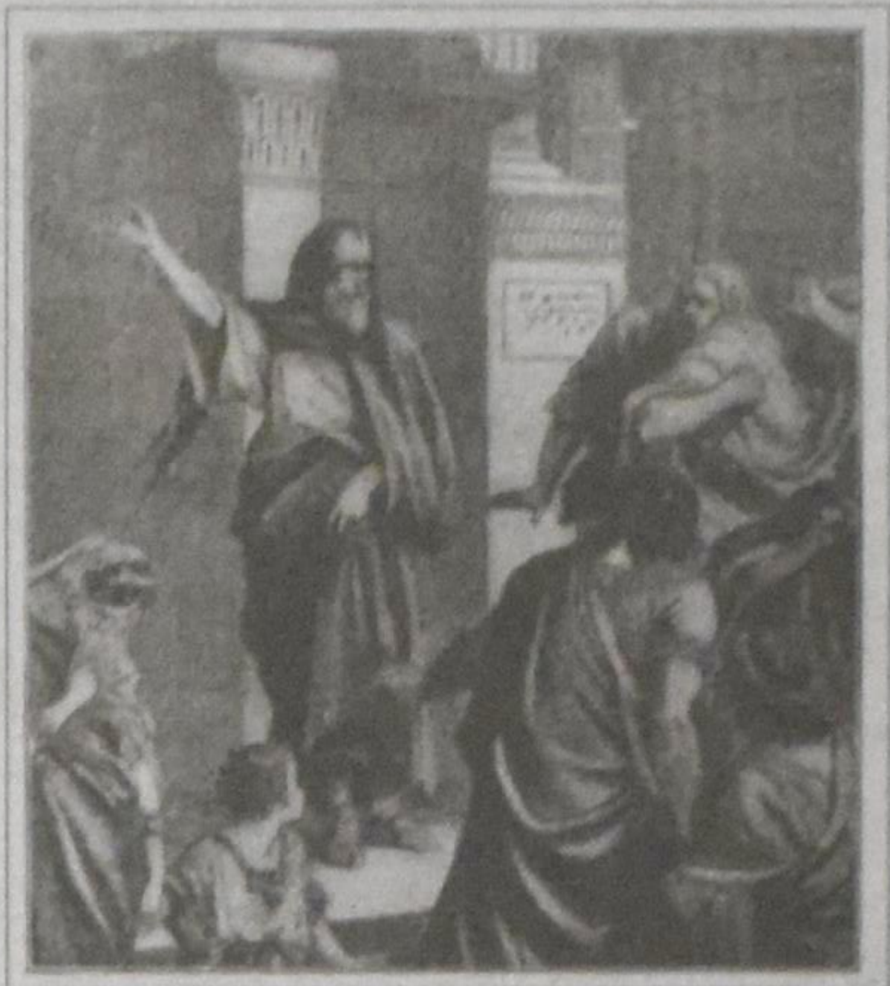
Those Who Have Truly Listened (6/30)

This morning I read the verses of 1 Timothy 3, a passage that describes the qualifications of those who may be leaders within the church. And having read those verses, which tell of the kind of godly character that must be present in the life of one who would be a pastor or elder, I was drawn to some words from the prophet Jeremiah, words that focus on what happens when we ignore such qualities and raise up unsuitable leaders.

Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. They say continually to those who despise the word of the Lord, 'It shall be well with you'; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you.'"

The twenty-third chapter of Jeremiah falls near the halfway point of the book, in the midst of a section where the prophet is foretelling the end of the Davidic dynasty and the coming captivity of God's people. In this chapter Jeremiah pronounces judgments against the false prophets who had become a plague within the nation. Though these words were spoken some 600 years before Christ and in a particular time and context, his words ring as true today as they did then. "They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord. They say continually to those who despise the word of the Lord, 'It shall be well with you'; and to everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart, they say, 'No disaster shall come upon you'" (16, 17).

What was a problem then is a problem now. So many men and women today speak visions of their own minds and teach what has so evidently *not* come from the mouth of the Lord. So many say that it shall be well with people whose souls are in grave danger; they seek to show from Scripture that Christ will save those even who have never heard his Word, and who have never humbled themselves before the Lord. They say, "It shall be well with you" to those who sit in the pews but have never had their hearts of ice melted by the Lord. They speak lies and blasphemies, all the while claiming to speak for God.



The next verse, verse eighteen, teaches us how to choose good and noble teachers of the Word. If only we could master this simple piece of wisdom the church would be revitalized!

"For who among them has stood in the council of the Lord to see and to hear his word, or who has paid attention to his word and listened?"

This verse cuts to the heart of the difference between leaders who are godly and leaders who are only godly in pretense. A godly leader is one who has not only stood in the council of the Lord, and has thus seen and heard his Word, but one who has paid attention and listened. He has listened not just with his ears, but with his heart. Many of the most popular leaders can appear godly – they can quote the Bible at will and can discuss Christian doctrine with the best of them. Yet what they lack is humility – true humility. True humility, the humility we learn about in the Bible and the humility God requires of us, is a submission to God and a submission to the Scriptures as he has given them to us. Leaders that honor God are those who are humble before God, not only hearing, but listening and applying. They are leaders who humble themselves before this Book, knowing and believing that it is perfect and good and sufficient. They know that all they can offer is this book. No wisdom arising from their own minds can truly bring help to a needy soul. They know that all they can offer is what God provides.

Here is God's indictment of the false prophets, who claimed to speak for him, but in reality, spoke only their own folly (verses 21 and 22):

"I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds."

Here we see another mark of false teachers. The false prophets ran to prophecy with an arrogant boldness that was not characteristic of the difficulty and gravity that accompanied true prophecy. And as we saw in the previous verses, these false prophets had not listened to the Word of the Lord. Had they been attentive to the Lord, they would have proclaimed the truth of God to the people, who would have turned from their evil ways. But instead the prophets tickled the peoples' ears, telling them only what they wanted to hear. They told the people that God was not angry with them, and that it would go well with them. They told them this despite open rebellion against God.

Doesn't this sound suspiciously similar to the warning Paul gave Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:3-4? "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths."

The time is coming and has come. In fact, it seems that this has been the refuge of sinners since the dawn of time. When people are in rebellion against God, they gather for themselves teachers who will condone their sinful lifestyles instead of condemning them in the name of the Lord. This is not preaching that condemns ungodly lifestyles and pleads with men to turn from their selfish ways. Instead, it is preaching to the choir, preaching that may stir the mind or the emotions, but preaching that is devoid of the Spirit and his power to truly pierce the heart and the conscience.

Posted by Tim Challies

post continued at http://www.challies.com/christian-living/those-who-have-truly-listened#more

Culture

THE PUBLIC SQUARE
Harry Antonides

Israel besieged

Israel's task is daunting and the stakes couldn't be higher. But our cause is great and it is far from lost. (Caroline B. Glick, *Jewish World Review*, June 4, 2010)

The confrontation on May 30 between the Israeli navy and the Turkey-originating flotilla was not about delivering needed supplies to Gaza. Instead, it was intended to break the Israeli blockade, and/or to provoke the Israeli navy into action that would provide photo ops to show the world that Israel is a ruthless bully that kills defenseless "peace activists."

All of the smaller ships were boarded and re-directed to an Israeli harbor. But when the navy men landed on the lead ship, Mavi Marmara, they were met by men who tried to club and knife them to death. Only then did the Israeli force resort to their guns, killing nine men.

The Marmara radioed this message to the Israelis: "Shut up, go back to Auschwitz. We're helping Arabs go against the U.S., don't forget 9/11." Later, the Islamist militants appeared on Arab television shouting, "Remember Khayber, Khaybar, O Jews! The army of Muhammad is returning!"

Worldwide condemnation

The worldwide outcry against Israel was instantaneous. Most of the media presented this story as a case of Israel's criminal behavior against innocent people who were on a mercy mission to Gaza. For this "crime," the U.N.'s Security Council was quick to condemn Israel's action; its Human Rights Council, consistently refusing to condemn the human rights violations of the most tyrannical regimes on the planet, issued its own condemnation.

To find the truth among many conflicting stories, we need to understand the context and background of this violent confrontation.

Ever since the founding of the state of Israel in 1948, it has been forced to defend itself by military means. Currently, it is surrounded by Islamist countries and organizations, including Hamas and Fatah, supported by Iran, that have declared their intention to destroy Israel. When Iran succeeds in obtaining the nuclear bomb, the threat level against Israel will move from serious to grave.

Israel has the right to defend itself by ensuring that no weapons will be shipped into Gaza, now controlled by Hamas, a terrorist organization that has never hidden its intent to destroy Israel. The U.S. has been a loyal ally of Israel. However, with the presidency of Barack Obama that support has waned in a way that poses a serious threat to Israel.

The world's oldest sickness

Anti-Semitism is deeply imbedded in the Koran and other Islamic scriptures where Jews are likened to apes and pigs. Islamic teachers and leaders have indoctrinated their followers, starting with the very young, with the idea that Jews are detestable people who must be hated and subjected or killed. Consequently, those who turn away from Islam, such as Wafa Sultan and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, testify that Jew-hatred was ceaselessly drummed into their minds in the schools they attended. It was one of the hardest things they had to abandon.

Abdallah Jarbu, Deputy Minister of Religion of Hamas, has stated that Jews "want to present themselves to the world as if they have rights, but, in fact, they are foreign bacteria – a microbe unparalleled in the world." Jarbu then prayed: "May He annihilate this filthy people who have neither religion nor conscience."

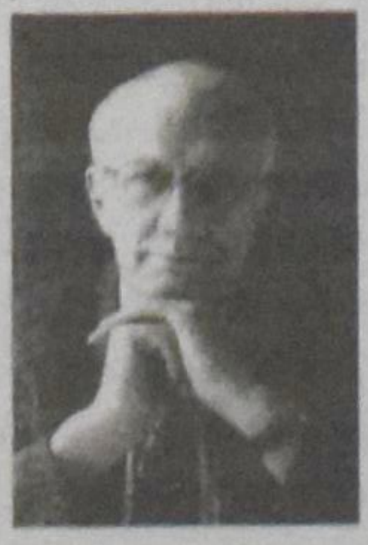
The Iranian newspaper *Kayhan*, a mouthpiece of the Iranian mullahs, recently called Israel "a cancerous tumor" that must be eliminated from the Islamic Middle East. (Clifford May, *National Post*, June 14, 2010)

The Muslim hatred of the Jews is rooted in its religion. But what about the anti-Semitism in the West? David Solway has called it the "world's oldest sickness" for which no cure has been found. He writes that there is emerging a neo-anti-Semitism that is "virulently anti-Israel," spreading the monstrous lie that the state of Israel is determined to engage in ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians.

To stand with Israel

And so we are left with the duty of every fair-minded person to stand as one man against the lies that are now told and retold in the Western media about Israel and the Jews. This appeal for truth-telling about the forces now arranged against Israel comes from a Spanish politician and journalist, Pilar Rahola. In a recent article she castigated U.S. and Israel bashers. She concluded her powerful testimony:

I am not Jewish. Ideologically I am left and by profession a journalist. Why am I not anti-Israeli like my colleagues? Because as a non-Jew I have the historical responsibility to fight against Jewish hatred and currently against the hatred for their historic homeland, Israel.... As a journalist it is my duty to search for the truth beyond prejudice, lies and manipulations. The truth about Israel is not told.... That is to say that as non-Jew, journalist and lefty, I have a triple moral duty with Israel, because if Israel is destroyed, liberty, modernity and culture will be destroyed too.



Harry Antonides (hantonides@sympatico.ca) retired as director of the former Work Research Foundation. He lives in Willowdale, Ontario.

Christ @ Culture
Lloyd Rang

Soccer, anarchy and Dooyeweerd

I was in Frankfurt, Germany. He was a stranger, dressed in a tailored suit. We passed on the escalator. Under his breath, he said: "Hup, Holland, Hup!"

I was driving down a street in Bowmanville, Ontario. She was a soccer mom in a minivan. Our eyes locked. She smiled, and gave me a thumbs-up.

During this World Cup season, I have been amazed by how people react to a team jersey or a flag on your car. I have been greeted warmly by strangers. I have been smiled at like a celebrity. All because I wear the orange of Holland, head to toe, like some giant, middle-aged traffic pylon.

It's fantastic.

But it's also perplexing.

Because it's not just other fans of the Netherlands who are nice to me. It's people with England's Cross of St. George on their cars. People in t-shirts with the flag of Brazil and its words "*Ordem e Progresso*" (Order and Progress) written across it.

In other sporting events, rival fans feel a sense of – well – rivalry. Sometimes it's a bitter and nasty rivalry. But not in World Cup soccer. There is something different about World Cup soccer. Because, above all, what fans of the World Cup love is "The Beautiful Game" itself.

Celebration

You can't explain that feeling to a non-soccer fan. Many people can't get past the theatrical diving and endless passing and low scoring games. That's their loss. For fans, there is nothing like seeing Messi or Ronaldo or Robben play with creativity, grace and raw athleticism. It's a celebration of sport itself. Of life. Of humanity.

That's a rare thing in our world.

While the English and the German soccer teams were playing this past Saturday, a number of thugs, hooligans and anarchists did their best to disrupt peaceful and democratic protests at the G20 in Toronto. They broke a lot of glass and burned some police cars, and many were arrested.

Yet, after the weekend ended, the world went on and nothing much changed. Which is also perplexing because political action ought to be significant. It ought to be important. It ought to weigh more, in the balance of things, than a mere soccer game. But it didn't. The next day, none of my friends were talking about it. If the protestors had a point to make, they didn't succeed – because none of us could hear what they were trying to say over the sounds of shattering glass.

But the World Cup discussions? Those were involved. Passionate. Informed.

Admiring dedication

A cynical person might say that we don't pay enough attention to things like anti-globalization protests because humans tend to go along with the status quo. We accept the fact that the global economy and the forces of market capitalism are beyond our control. In other words – we are sheep.

A cynic would also say that we are easily duped and distracted by a sports event because it's simple. Sports is black and white – my side against yours in a game that ends with certainty and finality. A cynic would say we lack the ability or the patience or the empathy to think through global issues, and prefer to be entertained. In other words – we are stupid.

I think the cynics have it all wrong.

I think it takes nothing – no intelligence, no commitment, no particular depth of insight or keen sense of global politics and economics to chuck a brick through the window of a Starbuck's.

But it takes a lifetime of dedication to dribble the ball like Robin Van Persie. It takes insight to make the pure, crisp passes of Wesley Sneider. It takes a keen sense of insight into what makes people tick to be a coach like Guus Hiddink.

And I think people are smart enough to recognize this.

I think people are sensitive enough to celebrate this.

Living out your calling

In Christian schools – from Grade one through University – I was exposed to the thought and philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd, who taught that all of life is redeemed. He said there is no sphere of life where it is not both proper and necessary for Christians to live out their calling to the best of their ability.

Like me, a generation of Reformed Dutch-Canadians grew up with that Christian worldview. To this day it sits there, like some kind of neo-Calvinist microchip implanted in our brains – informing the way we view life, work and perform Christian service.

But like all good ideas, that philosophy also speaks to a notion that is shared by people outside the Reformed tradition, too.

We all know, deep down, that it's easy to run around on the street for a few hours, breaking stuff. We also know that it's hard to get up every morning determined to make a difference. It is difficult – very difficult – to live out your calling with passion, enthusiasm and energy, every day.

Nevertheless, that's what many of us do.

And when we see people taking the easy way out – mugging for the camera or throwing stones or setting fires – we are repulsed by the negativity, intellectual dishonesty and laziness that represents.

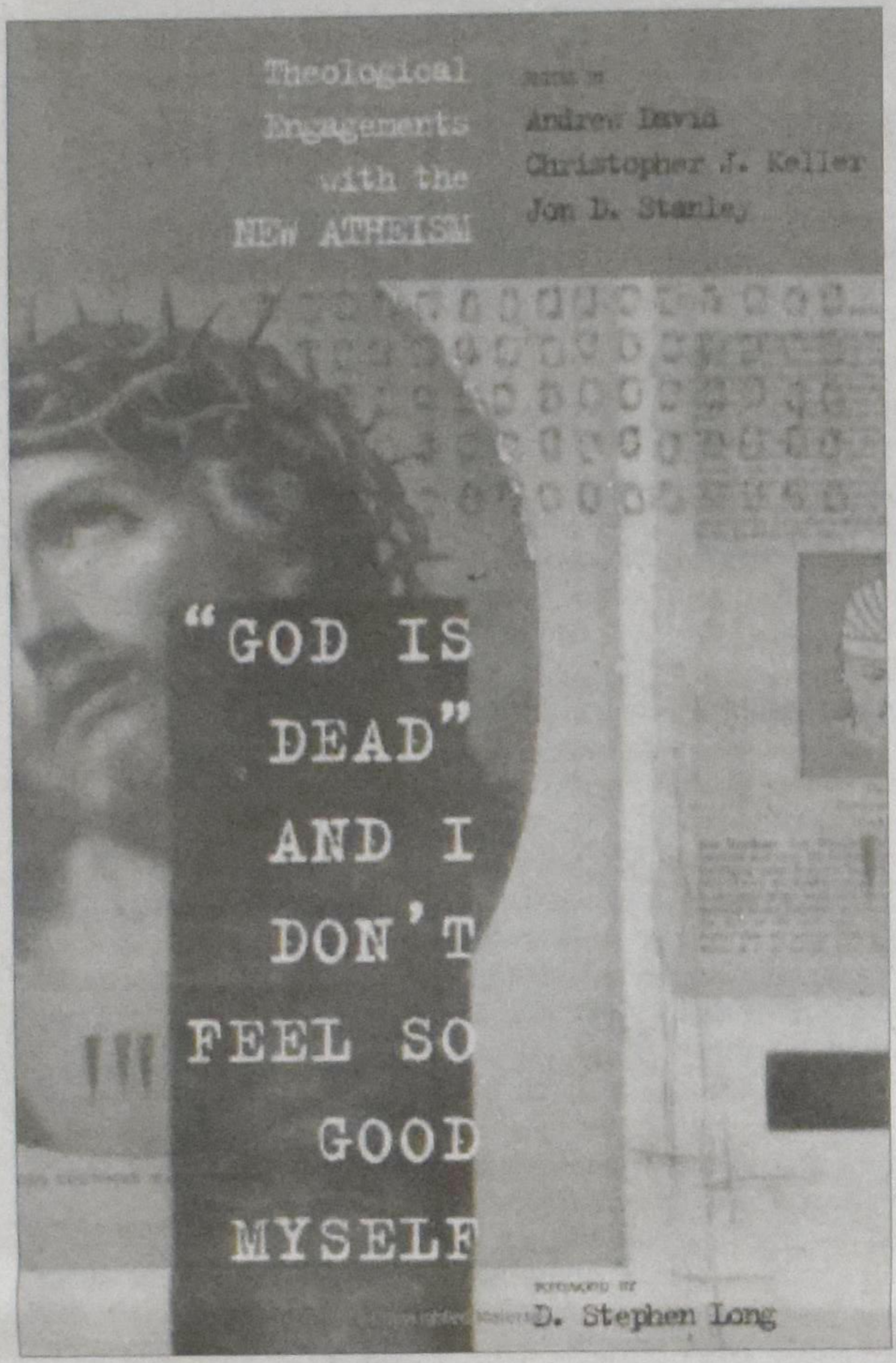
But when we see people dedicated to doing something beautifully and well – even if it is something as trivial as a soccer game – we are attracted to it. We celebrate it.

And so, we should.

Hup, Holland, Hup!

Lloyd Rang (Lloyd.rang@rogers.com) is a member of Rehoboth CRC in Bowmanville, Ontario.

Review / Transitions



A wise response to the New Atheism

God is Dead and I Don't Feel So Good Myself: Theological Engagements with the New Atheism. Edited by Andrew David, Christopher J. Keller and Jon Stanley with a foreword by D. Stephen Long. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010.

Reviewed by Jeffrey Hocking

Can a religious person respond to the New Atheism debate in such a way that calls for thoughtful engagement? Is it possible to enter a discussion with interlocutors who are at best dismissive and at worst hostile? The recently published collection of essays, interviews, poetry and art entitled *'God is Dead' and I Don't Feel So Good Myself: Theological Engagements with the New Atheism* attempts to do precisely this. The tone of the debate between New Atheism and its critics is not one which welcomes a "third party" – the battle lines have been drawn and the trenches have been dug. Walking out in between the trenches would be asking to be hit by bullets from both sides. However, this book does not intend to walk between the two sides as some sort of moderating party. Instead, the essays are attempts to approach the debate differently, listening and learning from both sides, while offering alternative critiques that are substantive, but charitable.

To keep with the metaphor of the battlefield, this book acts more as a medical unit than a third-party ally or peacemaker. It offers to pull people off the battlefield to a safe space with the intention of healing, not in order to reenter the war, but to encounter the debate and its participants anew from an orientation of faith. That said, the authors included in this work are unapologetically people of faith. It could be argued that this is what makes their engagement with the New Atheism different: the approach is one of faith characterized by openness rather than belief characterized by defensiveness. That the book is opened and closed with poetry and centered around art further establishes this sense.

Loss of hope

I found Jon Stanley's (an editor, contributor and ICS student) framing of the debate at the book launch held in Toronto helpful in understanding the orientation and purpose of *'God is Dead' and I Don't Feel So Good Myself.* He pointed to the dissolving hopes of both the Secularization and Christian Century theses. Both imagined that the end of the 20th century would see the validation of their respective positions. However, this has not been the case for either group, and the current debate between the New Atheists and their traditional critics can be understood as a coming to terms with this fact. The disillusionment of both visions makes this debate culturally important. *'God is Dead' and I Don't Feel So Good Myself* responds to this cultural significance with well-written essays by upcoming and well-established thinkers such as Merold Westphal, interviews with recognizable figures such as Stanley Fish, John Millbank, Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Taylor, provocative poetry and intriguing art by Paul Roorda.

The introduction by D. Stephen Long is helpful in identifying some of the differences in the essays included in the book. He outlines four types of responses. However, the book itself is not laid out in a way that visualizes these differences. My sense is that this was intentional, for while Long's analysis is helpful, it is by no means static or final. This is, thankfully, not another "four-views" book.

No easy answers

'God is Dead' and I Don't Feel So Good Myself does not propose a set of possible answers for the reader, and this is what makes the book such an outstanding contribution to the subject. Atheism at its best confronts the religious person with suffering (the essay by Andy Barnes, "Reading Philip Pulman in Manila" reminds us of this), and to suffering there should be no easy answers or pre-constructed viewpoints – something both the New Atheism and their critics often lose sight of. It is precisely this that sets *'God is Dead' and I Don't Feel So Good Myself* apart; it does not offer the reader easy answers or knock-down arguments.

I highly recommend the book as a response to New Atheism born out of grace, wisdom and faith. In one of the latter essays, Betty Crook tells the story of how an atheist she had been dating broke up with her for being religious (despite her having never explicitly stated as much). She asked how he knew she was religious and writes that his response was: "I know you believe in God because you practice gratitude." The authors in this book are explicit about their religious convictions, but it becomes apparent to me that they believe in God because of the grace practiced in their work. This makes the book well worth reading and a unique contribution on the subject of atheism and religion.

Jeffrey Hocking (jhocking@icscanada.edu)is a junior member at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto where he completed an MA and is currently working towards a PhD in theology.

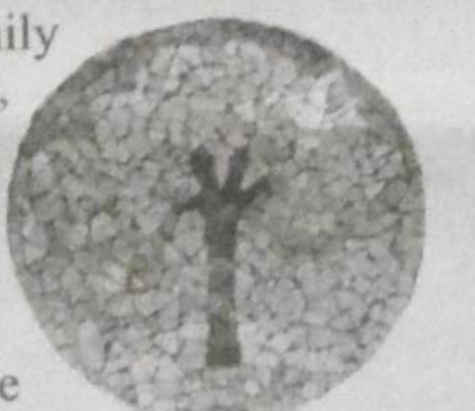
Becoming a mosaic

The next time I write another column, I will be a married man. The wedding will be over, the cake will be eaten, the vows will be said and the Kleenexes will be recycled. We are going to celebrate.

I will celebrate the wedding with friends that I've had for 30 years. Friends that have walked through each stage of my life with me, friends that have been with me through joy and suffering, hurt and hope. They will be a witness to their own dedication.

I will be celebrating with friends that have known me only with Shannon, friends with whom we have cultivated a relationship – knowing us together and not our late spouses. These are relatively new relationships but ones that are very important for us in our path together.

I will also be meeting some of Shannon's friends for the very first time. Shannon will meet some of my friends for the very first time. Both of us will embrace these strangers, whom we already love because they are part of who we became to be. I will hold Shannon's hand. We will dance together and continue our romance. We will continue the path God has set for us. It won't be a witness to how the power of romance saved us from a dark place. The truth is that it wasn't romantic love that liberated us, but it was romantic love that lit up our dark places. And it's that romance that will continue to remind us what we have and that we must cherish it.



We will "blend"' our family together. Or more aptly put, we will celebrate a moment in time – a beautiful, rewarding moment that we believe God planned all along. Amanda Cleary Eastep, in her article for *Catapult Magazine* puts it like this: "Nothing deemed as 'broken' can really ever become 'blended.' Blended brings to mind an expensive coffee drink. We are more like a mosaic of fine china and Mexican tiles and semi-precious jewels from the craft store, placed lovingly, haphazardly into the cement of the stepping stones along our new path."

And the new path will begin. We will remember the ones who have been with us before. We will light a candle to their honour. We will invite our guests to stand with us and promise to support us. The guests will say yes. And there is no doubt in us that they will remain faithful.

I will stand next to our eight-year-old son, our seven-year-old son and our five-year-old son – my *best men.* I will stand in front of my parents-in-law and my future parents-in-law. They will both convey public blessings on us. They will stand beside us, pray with us and witness to God's faithfulness.

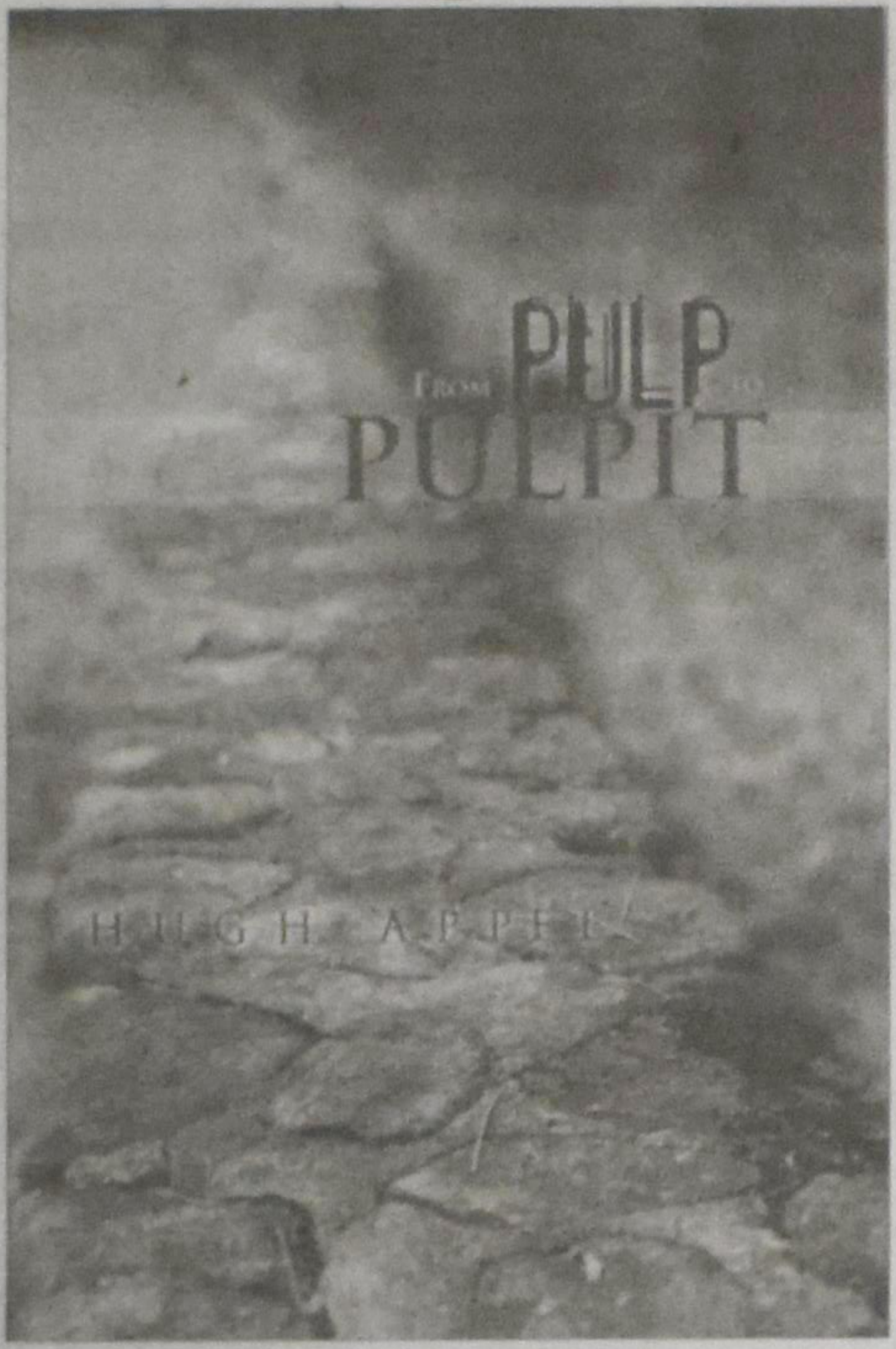
By the time I write again, I will have stood in front of my community, my children, my new family, my God and will have uttered those now more meaningful words: "For better or for worse, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer…."

We will say "I do." We will make our vows to each other. As husband to wife and wife to husband. As parents to children. As children to parents. And at the end of the service, God will get the last word, as he always does. In the same way that we have made vows to each other, God will give us his vows. He will say I do bless you and I do keep you, I do make my face to shine upon you, be gracious unto you. I do give you my peace.

Mendelt Hoekstra (mendelt.hoekstra@gmail.com) is the founder and director of the Music Therapy program at Bethesda. He lives near St. Catharines, Ont. with his three children.

Review / Vacation

Blessing and burdens of a Dutch Presbyterian pastor



From Pulp to Pulpit by Hugh Appêl. Guardian Books, Belleville, Ontario, 2010. $21.95 Can. 249 pp.

Reviewed by Bert Witvoet

Hugh Appêl is a retired pastor in the Presbyterian Church, who grew up Christian Reformed. The title of his autobiography indicates how he moved from working in a pulp and paper factory in Thorold, Ontario, to various pulpits in the Presbyterian Church. His journey to the pulpit while married with children was more easily facilitated in the 1960s in the Presbyterian denomination than it would have been had he stayed in the Christian Reformed Church. Although that factor was not what motivated him and his wife, Jane, to leave the CRC. They felt restricted by what Appêl calls a fear of liberalism that made the church they attended become "stricter, leaning towards legalism." Yet, the parting of ways seemed amicable and in no way hindered later cooperation between him and various CRC pastors and churches.

I would think that many of our readers would be enticed by an account of how this Dutch immigrant couple struggled through years of low income while they worked as summer camp directors at Camp Shalom (of the Reformed denomination) and as Hugh began his slow path of studying for the ministry. During that time they were entrusted with various charges in the Presbyterian denomination before Hugh was finally ordained. The book gives insight into how things work in Presbyterian circles and structures. Certainly the Appêls were able to enter the Canadian fabric of life more easily than many of Hugh's colleagues in the CRC denomination.

The ups and downs

Appêl describes various moments of triumph and disappointment in his ministry. He starts out his story with an incident that he elaborates on later in his book. "Lately I had found several notes pushed under the door of my office from some people complaining and critizing my work without adding their names." This was followed by a visit from an elder, who delivered an envelope containing the results of a survey several elders had conducted in the congregation without the pastor's knowledge. "Most of the replies were negative," writes Appêl. "One reply suggested that I should use less Scripture in my messages and more examples." The full context of this sad development is explained in a later chapter. It appears that Appêl had run into a church that wanted no growth and few changes.

Apart from this negative turn of events, which led to Hugh Appêl's resignation and a year of further theological study, he and his wife experienced what appears to have been a very fruitful and successful ministry in a number of Presbyterian churches. One of those churches was in Niagara Falls, Ontario. I remember that when Hugh Appêl served in Niagara Falls, Jan Pereboom was pastor in the Christian Reformed Church there. The joke went around at that time that in Niagara Falls "the apple does not fall far from the pear tree," a play on the two pastors' names and a twisting of the proverb "the apple does not fall far from the tree," meaning, someone is very much like his parents. (One could even interpret this joke to mean that the younger Rev. Appêl did not differ significantly from the older Rev. Pereboom – that they had similar backgrounds and believed the same doctrines – but that's stretching a rather cute phrase.)

Inspiring and educational

What shines in the book is the way the Appêls were able to depend very strongly on the leading of the Holy Spirit. The author tells of several moving experiences in his ministry, not the least of which is the story of Scott Gordon, a ten-year-old boy who suffered from an incurable brain tumour, and who told his parents that the Lord had shown him that he only had 91 days left to live since his last operation. This prediction came true. And it prepared both Scott and his parents to meet the deadline with peace and gratitude.

This book should be of special interest to people who love the church and are open to appreciating what happens in other denominations. The experiences of this pastor could teach and perhaps inspire other pastors or would-be pastors. In the last chapter, Hugh reflects on such questions as, "Is there enough support for pastors? Has the church changed over the years? What are the benefits of working together with other pastors?" Appêl is not a sociologist, and does not address developments in our society that cause a falling away from the Christian faith, for example. Nor is he philosophically inclined to search out the deeper mysteries of life, at least not in this book. His emphasis is on being pastoral and being willing to try new things in faith and through prayer. One gets the impression of a man with a positive spirit and untiring devotion to his task.

Some of the information seems trivial to the average reader, who may not be interested in how certain renovations took place in either the manse or the sanctuary. The inclusion of these bits of information may be attributable to the fact that the author wants to preserve memories for himself and his offspring. Nevertheless, I thoroughly enjoyed reading this autobiography and recognized in both Hugh Appêl and his wife, Jane, people with servant hearts who appreciate the power of prayer, and Scripture as well as the richness of a Calvinistic heritage.

Bert Witvoet is co-editor of CC and lives in St. Catharines, Ont.

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Classifieds / Vacation

Birthday

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Dorothy Veenhof; Jacquie & Howard Vanderwier, Diane & Paul Droppert, Heather & Henry Kikkert, Anne & Martin Vyn, Will Veenhof, Nick Veenhof; 24 grandchildren & 8 spouses; 15 great-grandchildren

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I will see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living. Psalm 27:13

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Retirement Celebration

Covenant CRC of Woodstock, Ontario announces the retirement of our

Associate Pastor, **Rev. Gerald Hogeterp**

after **41 years of service.**

Rev. Hogeterp and his wife Jackie faithfully served churches in High River, First Chilliwack, Bethel Saskatoon, Calvary Ottawa & Covenant Woodstock and served as missionaries with Christian Reformed World Missions in Nigeria.

An **evening of celebration** is planned for **Saturday, August 28**, 2010 with dinner and a program.
Rev. Hogeterp will preach his farewell sermon in a service of celebration on **August 29**, 2010. For more information, please contact the church office at woodcoveadmin@bellnet.ca

Anniversaries

1955 June 14 2010

Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain. Psalm 127:1

Louis and Hennie Van Ramshorst

55th Wedding Anniversary

It is with joy and thanksgiving to the Lord for his great faithfulness and blessing our parents with 55 years of marriage that we celebrate with them.

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With love from your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

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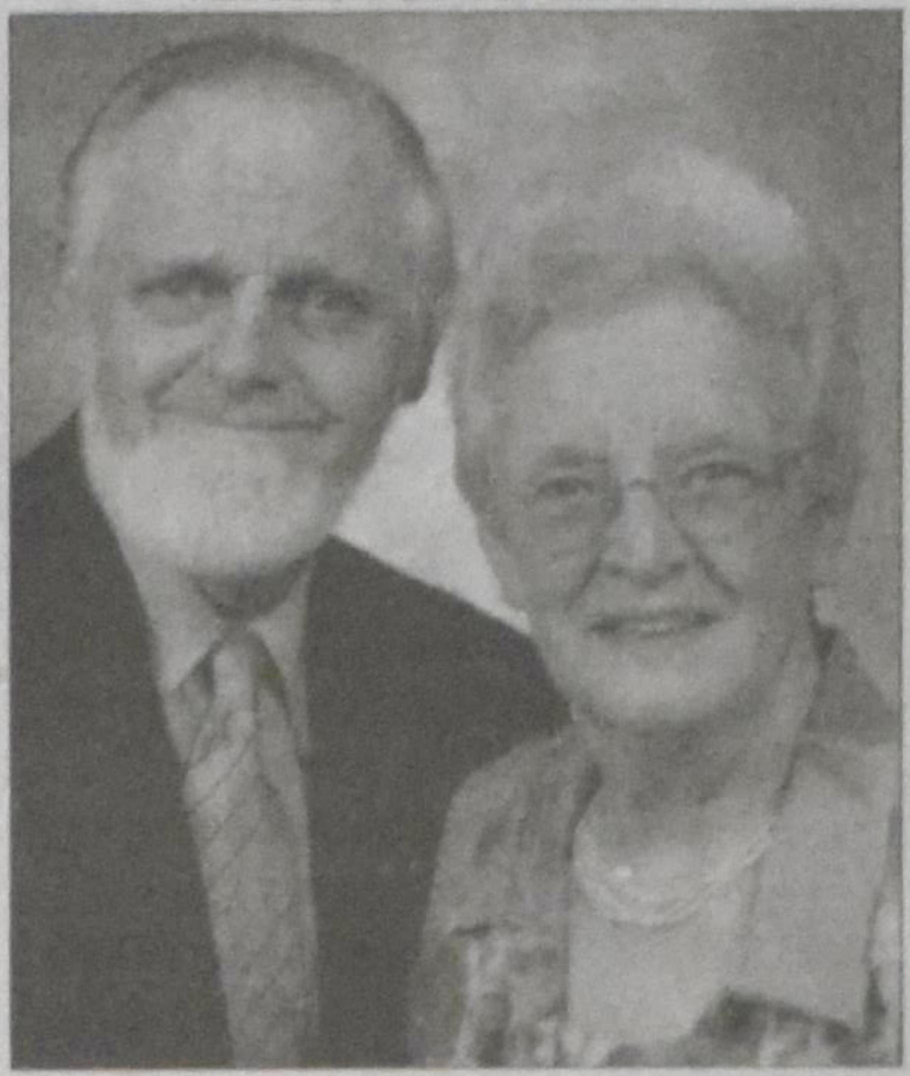
1955 Franeker Fr. Nederland

Abbotsford BC Canada 2010



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Clarissa, Johann, Charity, Joshua, & Steven
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Ann† Klok,
Maria Klok, *Edmonton, Alberta*
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Jessica, Aaron, and Sarah Ann Wijngaarden

We thank the Lord for his faithfulness and many blessings through all these years.

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Obituary

Rekken
April 20, 1919

Drayton
June 10, 2010

What is your only comfort in llife and in death?
That I am not my own, but belong – body and soul, in life and in death – to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.
Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 1

On June 10, 2010 at the age of 91

Antje Dina (Anita) Rhebergen

went to be with her Lord.

She was the beloved daughter of Peter and Janna Berendina Rhebergen

Loved sister and sister-in-law of
†Johanna & †Holger Larsen
†Berend & Sina Rhebergen *of Hengelo, Holland*
Gerrie & †Bart Boschman *of Neede, Holland*
Gerald & Frances Rhebergen *of Tottenham, Ontario*
†John Rhebergen & Mary (Rhebergen) Smit and her husband Albert Smit *of Carrying Place, Ontario*
Diane & †Bill Hesselink *of Georgetown, Ontario*
Diny & †Sid Reitsma *of Burlington, Ontario*
George & Grace Rhebergen *of Belleville, Ontario*
†Engbert & †Ina Rhebergen
†Henry & Lenie Rhebergen *of Cobourg, Ontario*
Elly & Ralph Hoftyzer *of Drayton, Ontario*
Bert Rhebergen *of Hamilton, Ontario*
John & Rita Rhebergen *of Edmonton,*
Tine & Harry Houtman *of Toronto, Ontario*
Peter & Cathy Rhebergen *of Chesley, Ontario*

Anita is also lovingly remembered by many nephews and nieces and their families.

But I with expectation have on Thy grace relied;
My heart in Thy salvation shall still with joy confide.
And I with voice of singing will praise the Lord above,
Who, richest bounties bringing,
has dealt with me in love. 'P.H. 18 verse 3

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Classifieds / Job

Summer salad with goat cheese

Zomersalade met geitenkaas

- 200 grams / 7 oz. goat cheese
- 7 grams / ¼ oz. fresh mint
- 3 nectarines
- 4 tbls walnut oil
- ½ lemon
- 1 tbsp honey
- 75 grams / 3 oz. mixed salad
- 75 grams / 3 oz. fresh rucola
- 55 grams / 2 oz. walnuts
- black pepper

Prepare the goat cheese by cutting it into long slivers of about 1/3" wide. Strip the mint leaves from the sprigs. Peel the nectarines and divide them in segments.

Heat a heavy skillet or stovetop grill pan. Thinly brush the nectarine segments with about 1 tbsp walnut oil. Grill them for a minute each side and take from the pan.

Squeeze the half lemon over a salad bowl, add honey, walnut oil, fresh ground black pepper and salt to taste and whish into a smooth dressing.

Gently fold in the cheese, salad, rucola, mint and walnuts.

Put the salad into four bowls and garnish with the grilled nectarine segments. Serve with a wholewheat baguette and a fruity wine such as Sangria.

Variation: add parts of other fruits, such as sliced strawberries, pieces of apple and/or blueberries.

http://www.godutch.com/newspaper/recipes.php?id=1042

Do you have a favourite recipe to share with our readers? Send to **admin@christiancourier.ca**. We will post it on our website and run in the paper as room permits.

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See page 20 for another job ad.

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Nov 5 Christian Festival Concert 7:30 pm, Roy Thomson Hall, **Toronto**. See ad.

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The almost peaceful protest

Stephanie Tombari

TORONTO, Ont – Few Canadians will forget the images of the flaming police car and smashed Starbucks' window in downtown Toronto on June 26, 2010. But only a few thousand will ever know how good that day almost was.

"I'm here because I care about my daughter's future," said Ann of Toronto, one of an estimated 10,000 peaceful demonstrators who participated in the People First! Rally and March in Toronto on the first day of the G20 summit last month.

Organized by the Canadian and Ontario labour movements with support from several environmental, women's and human rights groups, the event was both a protest of the G20 and a demand for answers to some of society's most desperate concerns: fair pay, job security, changing climate and human rights.

With a "Good Jobs, Green Jobs" hardhat on head and umbrella in hand, I marched along with about 200 other volunteers from the Greenpeace office in midtown Toronto to Queen's Park, where peaceful protesters, demonstrators and interest groups converged for a pre-march rally.

And it *was* peaceful. Organizers had arranged the time and place of the rally and march in advance with Toronto police. Fervent speeches and live music went on in the background while demonstrators compared interests and swapped contact information. No anger or agitation – only passion, determination and cooperation. Just look at the pictures. A Greenpeace volunteer arm in arm with a steelworker? Who says we can't work together?

All the major news networks were at Queen's Park: CTV, CBC and the American news channel CNN. For the organizations that had worked so hard to make the G20 march a reality, the media attention was thought to be a good thing: the messages of the day would reach the masses, and maybe the world leaders as well.

Vandals not representative

But from the time the first window was broken several blocks south of the peaceful protests, the media dumped the story of the majority for the story of the few. "This is not surprising, because violence makes news and concerns those whose job it is to keep public order," writes scholar Sidney Tarrow. "But violence also has a morbid fascination for most people, who are simultaneously repelled by and attracted to it."

Though civil disobedience – which includes sit-ins like those of the American civil rights movement – is part of many normal demonstrations, vandalism like that of June 26 is intentionally destructive and an inacceptable form of protest by most organized social movements. Greenpeace staff were quick to remind volunteers that the name may mean 'green' but it also means 'peace.'

And so, a handful of "thugs" became TV-ratings heroes, and the legitimate demonstrators, well, were too legit. "The [Black Bloc vandals] completely took away from the message of job creation and what labour thinks should be done about that," said Sid Ryan, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour in a later interview with CBC.

"The property damaging episodes occurred well after a massive and peaceful assembly at Queen's Park," said David Coles, President of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union in a statement on June 28.

Most of us in the frontlines of the march were unaware that there had been any vandalism – until we wanted to go home. I remember looking back somewhere along Queen Street and seeing a gap in our marching pack, and being warned by another demonstrator that it was best to "keep moving." Turns out he was right. Shortly after the Starbucks window was shattered at around 4 p.m., the streetcars were shut down.

But for the most part, we were just regular people wanting change: workers, grandmothers, models, faith groups, teenagers, dads, moms and kids. You'd have been welcome there too.

What I experienced much of that day was the peaceful exercise of my democratic right to free speech and assembly – the chance to tell the most powerful people in the world that they're not doing enough for the world's least.

Stephanie Tombari (contact@stephanietombari.com) is a freelance writer from Burlington, Ontario.

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